DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 445 155 UD 033 753

AUTHOR Murray, Nancy; Armandt, Kristen; Dixit, Ravi; Fitzpatrick, Michael; Garrido, Marco; Leslie, Eric; Marcelino, Sandra; McQueen, Cyrus Malik, III; Prince, Marisa; Rego, Luis; White-Hammond, Mariama; Wong, Helen

TITLE Highways into the Past: History, Organizing & Power. A Project HIP-HOP Resource for High School Students.

INSTITUTION American Civil Liberties Union of Massachsetts, Boston.

PUB DATE 1997-00-00

NOTE 89p.

PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Learner (051)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Black History; Blacks; *Civil Rights; Curriculum; Democracy; High Schools; *Justice; *Racial Discrimination; *United States History

ABSTRACT

This curriculum, developed by a project titled "Highways into the Past, History, Organizing, and Power" (HIP-HOP), discusses the meaning of "race" in the United States and outlines the history of the civil rights movement. This resource begins with a unit that traces the concept of race as a social invention that reflects a social reality. The second and third units describe what life was like for African Americans after the period of Reconstruction and why a movement for civil and human rights was necessary. The fourth unit concentrates on the often-unnamed youth heroes who organized to resist injustice and inequality through their civil rights work. The fifth unit focuses on the way the civil rights movement has broadened into a fight for economic justice. This unit conveys a sense of what remains to be done in the fight for equality. (Contains 27 references.) (SLD)

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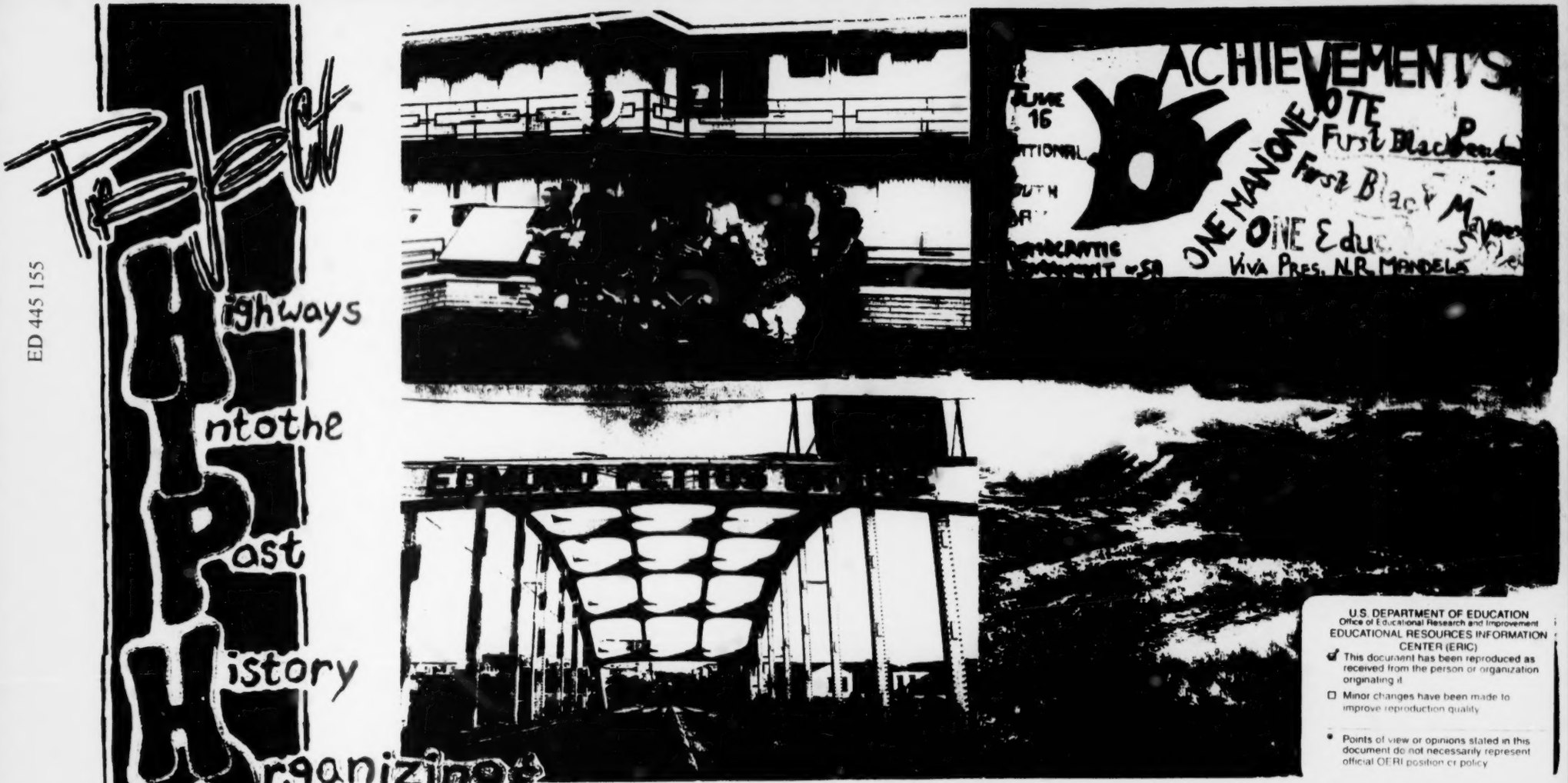

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A Project HIP-HOP Resource for High School Students

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Highways into the Past: History, Organizing & Power

A Project HIP-HOP Resource for High School Students

by

Nancy Murray
Director of the Bill of Rights Education Project

and the following members of Project HIP-HOP

Kristen Armandt, Ravi Dixit, Michael Fitzpatrick, Marco Garrido, Eric Leslie, Sandra Marcelino, Cyrus Malik McQueen III, Marisa Prince, Luis Rego, Mariama White-Hammond, Helen Wong

Produced by
The Bill of Rights Education Project
ACLU of Massachusetts
99 Chauncy Street, Suite 310
Boston, MA 02111
tel (617) 482-3170 x 314
fax (617) 451-0009

Highways into the Past: History, Organizing & Power

A Project HIP-HOP Resource for High School Students

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Introduction

We, the members of Project HIP-HOP (*Highways Into the Past, History, Organizing, and Power*), have journeyed South to discover a history of struggle against oppression. Through our presentations in schools and this curriculum, we hope to spark in today's youth a commitment to social action and determination to reclaim our power.

The problems of racism, sexism, and all forms of oppression have not left us. Many young people today are faced with the continuing problems of *de facto* segregation, the influx of drugs, ever-widening gaps in income, inequity in housing, education, employment opportunities, racist policing and a steadily growing prison system. How can they understand the world around them? How can they be inspired to work to change it?

We believe that students need to find a connection to the history of a time when young people all over our country stood up for their rights and to create a better society for all. We, as youth who participated in the trip to the South, were inspired by this history of struggle. We had not realized the level of youth involvement in the Movement. We had not realized the extent of resistance to an unjust system, resistance which pre-dated — and continued after — the period of 1955 - 1965 that is usually known as the "civil rights movement."

In this Resource, we use the word "Movement" to indicate that the struggle lasted longer than a decade, and that it was about more than civil rights as they are narrowly understood — the right to vote, to be treated equally before the law, and so on. In the larger sense, the Movement was about *human* rights, equality and social justice.

The Project HIP-HOP Resource begins with a unit on "race," since we think it is important to understand that race is not a biological reality, but instead a social invention which describes a social reality. The second and third units describe what life was like for African Americans after the rollback of Reconstruction, and why a Movement for civil and human rights was necessary. In the fourth unit we depart from the usual story of the civil rights phase of the Movement, which concentrates on a few highly visible leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We hope to draw attention to the thousands of often unnamed youth heroes who marched, participated in sit-ins, rode freedom buses, went to jail, and even died. They saw injustice and inequality all around them, and organized to resist it nonviolently.

In the fifth unit we focus on the way the Movement broadened into a fight for economic justice, and how the authorities moved against it. The final unit, on the Movement's "unfinished business," brings this history up to date, and conveys a sense of what we believe needs to be accomplished in the next phase of the Movement.

Throughout this Resource, we use our personal experience, first-hand interviews, group discussion, and critical reflection to try to engage youth in this history. We who made the journey South returned inspired, informed and connected to history -- and we hope some of the inspiration we have received gets transmitted in this material.

Finally, this curriculum is a way of keeping the faith with the courageous activists we have met on our journeys South, who shared their wisdom with us and urged us "to find our own path forward." Many of these people had paid a heavy price for their efforts to change an unjust system. One of them was Eddie Carthan, the former mayor of Tchula in the Mississippi Delta, whose story appears in unit five.

"Youth must pick up the baton," he told us. "The way things are going, you have to be prepared. It means a great deal to people to see youth who care about issues. We must challenge racism wherever we see it. Or we can very easily slip back and lose the gains that have been made."

Project HIP-HOP, August 1997

UNIT ONE: What is "Race"?

We think we know what "race" is. We use the word all the time. But nothing about "race" can be taken for granted. Indeed, we are not really sure if different biological races of humans even exist.

Scientists who are studying human genes — the basic building blocks of human life — report that "race accounts for only a miniscule .012 percent difference in our genetic material."[1] In other words, under the world's most powerful microscopes, "race" is almost invisible. The genetic differences between individuals of the same race are far greater than the differences between races — assuming we even agree on what these races are. Differences that the eye sees as "race" are skin-deep adaptations to climate, which evolved as humans moved out from what the fossil record shows to be the ancestral home of us all, the continent of Africa.

The Phipps case

If you were asked to name the principal racial groups, what would you say? It is likely that you will name white (or "Caucasian"), Asian (or "Mongoloid"), and black ("Negroid"). But what makes one person "white" and another "black"? Are racial distinctions visible to the eye in the color of skin, type of hair, and features?

If so, try to make sense of this case before Louisiana courts in 1982-3 — only about 15 years ago. Susie Guillory Phipps looked "white" and lived as a white woman in a family with several blond, blue-eyed members. She was, however, denied a passport because she had checked "white" on her passport application.

Her problem was that her birth certificate gave her race as "colored." The midwife at her birth had written in colored based on information that the family had "colored" blood. It turned out that she was the great-great-great-great granddaughter of a French planter and a woman of African descent he made his mistress in 1770, before the American Revolution. Two hundred years later, in 1970, the Lousiana legislature passed a law (statute 42:267) that says a person is "black" or "colored" if his or her ancestry is more than *one thirty-second* black. Appearance has nothing to do with it.

When Susie Phipps petitioned the court to have the status on her parents' birth certificates changed to "white" so she and her brothers and sisters could change their birth certificates to "white" as well, the state district court and then the state appeals court refused. The judges said that racial designations could not be changed and that "colored" was Mrs. Phipps' correct classification because she was 3/32 black. In 1986, three years after the Louisiana law was repealed because of the negative publicity which the Phipps case attracted, both the Louisiana Supreme Court and the US Supreme Court refused to review or reverse this lower court ruling.

If race isn't something you see when you look at a person like Susie Phipps, and if you have trouble detecting it under a microscope, what is it? Different countries disagree on how to define it. Only the United States defines a person with a drop of "black blood," a trace of African ancestry, as "Black."[2] No other country uses what has been called the "one drop rule" as a defining criteria of who is Black.

If Susie Phipps had grown up in Brazil or other Latin American countries, for instance, she would be thought of as "white." If she had grown up in apartheid South Africa, she would never have been placed in the same category as African "Blacks." She would either have been classified in the buffer group between Black and White called "Coloured," or she might have been successfully reclassified in the privileged category of "White" if she could demonstrate that she was accepted as white by her peers and "behaved white." Under the apartheid classification system, "nonwhite" people could be classified as "Black" if a comb placed in their hair

Project HIP-HOP Voices

The question was not a new one, "What are you?" Even before I emigrated from the Philippines, I was asked "what" I was. Being light-skinned for a Filipino, many of my classmates mistook me for an "American." To them an "American" meant, of course, a white person.

After having arrived in the US, my "American" classmates revived the question, as I was now too foreign-looking to be mistaken for "American." I wasn't white, which meant that I would share in a tradition people of color in this country daily partake in, I would have to negotiate how my non-white body measured against the white standard. For me that meant I had to suffer that humiliating question, "What are you?"

Growing up, I had no sense of humor about it. Every time I was asked what I was, I sincerely felt as if blinding spotlights had betrayed me, and had revealed that, crime of crimes, I wasn't white. I laugh now, remembering how in basketball, I and another Asian were consigned to the "foreign" team because, to the middle-school mind, we clearly couldn't qualify as "American" players. Kids would want to make fun of me and call me a racial slur, yet the old standbys, "nigger" or even "chink," didn't seem to apply. They'd try "chink" and add "gook" for good measure. Ha, I felt like saying, I am neither of those! Yet nor could I say that I was white.

In this country I wasn't American — not because I had emigrated, but because I wasn't white. The name "American" was apparently very much tied to race.

My experience has shown that whites have a better claim to being "American" than I did, and that meant they were exempt from their own question, "What are you?", a question I could never ask of them. While whites, among themselves, could ask, "Who are you?" I was to them a "What?" — a body before a person.

How do you define yourself? Do you think of yourself in terms of a particular "race"? Can you identify with anything in these Project HIP-HOP voices?

Project HIP-HOP Voices

I had to learn who I was, and part of that meant what race I was. My race was defined by those around me. It wasn't easy for people to place my racial identity. Some thought I was Latino, others though I was a mix, between Latino, Black, and even white. Some figured me for being Native American. None were right. I am Indian American. My parents emigrated to the US. I was born and raised in Boston, and have lived there all my life. But there were no other Indians in my neighborhood. Therefore, on account of my brown skin, people put me in whichever category makes sense to them. It's interesting to be called a "spic" when you're not.

Race is something placed upon me by society. Since it is based on how one looks, regardless of my true racial identity, I became what I *looked* like, Black or Latino. Yet one thing has remained the same: though people can't place what I am, they know I am certainly not white.

Growing up "non-white" has its positives and negatives. Since I lived in a mostly poor and working-class Black and Latino neighborhood, I was more accepted by Blacks and Latinos on account of our shared "non-white" skin. I became a "person of color," and formed a community with other people of color. I also felt more comfortable with Blacks and Latinos because we faced everyday racism. There was a tacit understanding between us that, because of our shared lack of white skin, we'd have to stick together. Of course my color was a burden as well. I had to deal with harassing police, condescending teachers, and other pains people of color face in white society.

I am brown. People see that, yet they don't know the history behind my color, that my parents came from a country which struggled against a colonial force. They don't care to understand the rich culture of India. I am no one beyond my color. I am brown and not to be trusted, to be watched more carefully, to be stupid and less-than, to be different. I *am* different, but why does my difference attract the fear and uncertainty I see in their looks? Race is a construct which has shaped how I've been treated, as it has influenced how I see people.

would stay there; they would be called "Colored" if it fell out. This was "science," apartheid-style.

The US racial hierarchy

The one thing the various racial classifications adopted by different countries do share is that they evolved over time to serve the interests of those with power. In colonial America, the most pressing need was for labor. At first, people were divided into two categories: "Christians" and "heathen." People of all colors — red, black and white — were enslaved, some for life, some for shorter periods. Only gradually, slavery became equated with color. By the end of the 17th century, people who were considered "white" were being treated differently from enslaved Africans, and conditions of slavery and freedom were being defined in law in terms of color. White and Black were soon driven far apart, as slaves became property and were written out of the human race.

By the time the Constitution was written in the late 18th century, 20 percent (750,000) of the total population of four million people in the United States were enslaved. There were 200,000 indentured servants — white people who could be made to work like slaves, but only for set periods of time. Half the population were women, who could not vote, could not sue or be sued in court, and had no control over their own earnings. At least a third of the white males could not vote, because they did not own enough property. The new nation was for whites only — especially for those who were male and sufficiently rich.

We hear of the "one drop rule" defining all people with mixed African and white ancestry as "Negro" or "Black" in the 18th and 19th centuries. It enabled slave owners to define racially-mixed children, often their own, as "Negro" in order to keep them enslaved. After slavery was abolished, the one-drop rule was preserved in the "color line" upholding white supremacy. Early in the 20th century it was written into law by many Southern states to cement the "Jim Crow" system of segregation. The paranoia among Southern whites about "invisible blackness" in their midst — people who look "white" but are really "black" — shows how little "race" had to do with appearance.

In his book *Who is Black? One Nation's Definition*, F. James Davis writes:

"Concern about people passing as white became so great that even behaving like blacks or willingly associating with them was often treated as more important than any proof of actual black ancestry....race became entirely a social category with no necessity for any biological basis." [3]

So race was not a biological reality, but instead a social reality which evolved over time. It was not just a "color," but also a matter of culture — of how you acted. Your associations and life style would earn you a particular place in the racial hierarchy. Race as a social category was invented by the powerful in society to keep social control.

Where did "race" come from?

The word "race" at first had nothing to do with skin color. It entered the English language about four hundred years ago to justify nation-formation. The Anglo-Saxons (who inhabited England) used "race" to describe their own distinct traditions.

Along with other groups of Europeans, the English grew rich off the transatlantic slave trade and colonized large parts of the world, using their superior military technology to dominate indigenous peoples and take control of their land and resources. It was in this period of European colonization of other people's land that "race" was first used in a biological sense. European scientists attempted to classify all living things, including people, in the world. Armed with the new science of anthropology, they measured human skulls to evaluate "races" and line them up along the so-called "Chain of Being." At the head of the Chain, they placed their countrymen, the white Europeans. A German professor, J. Friedrich Blumenbach, gave them the name "Caucasian" in 1795 because he thought that the mountains of the Caucasus were probably their original home.

The white club

"White" or "Caucasian" has been as difficult to define as "Black." In the US there were bitter struggles in the 19th century about which groups should be accepted as "white." The nation's founding immigrant group, the English, did not want to share their status with southern and eastern Europeans, or the Irish and Jews. Again and again the "race" card would be played, as new immigrant groups proved they were worthy participants in the "American Dream" by keeping their distance from African Americans, and buying into the ideology of white supremacy. Popular racism deepened in the 19th century, as various ethnic groups tried to prove their worth as white patriots by spearheading physical attacks against Black people and forcing them out of jobs and neighborhoods.

A few immigrant groups remained outside the dominant categories of "black" and "white." The Chinese, for instance, who made up a tenth of California's population in the mid nineteenth century, were culturally distinct from Blacks and were never given the opportunity to join the "white" club. They remained "non whites." Standing outside the existing racial hierarchy, the Chinese were targeted by state legislatures and the US Congress, which tried to keep them out of the country altogether by passing Exclusion Acts aimed at Chinese immigrants in 1882, 1888, 1892, 1902, and 1904.

Race and the US Census

In the United States, the confusion surrounding categories of "race" remains unresolved, and becomes more illogical as the country becomes more diverse. By the middle of the next century, various "minority" groups will be the majority of the population.

This confusion can be seen in the shifting classifications used in US Census reports. The first census was conducted in 1790. It counted "free white males," "free white females," "other persons" (including free Blacks and Indians living in white settlements) and "slaves."

For two centuries, US Census classifications have been a messy mixture of categories based on "race," ethnicity, nationality, and linguistic group. Some countries have questioned whether racial classification systems shouldn't be abolished altogether, since no one can agree on a rational and consistent scheme that reflects the world's diversity of peoples. Canada, reacting against the way Nazi Germany used the "science of race" to attempt to exterminate Jews and Gypsies, dropped racial categories from its Census in 1951.

The debate over "multiracial"

In the United States, rather than moving to abolish racial categories, there have been efforts to add new ones for Arabs/Middle Easterners, Cape Verdeans, Creoles, and European-Americans to the 2000 Census. There has also been a push to include the category "multiracial" to represent children whose parents are of different races. (In the US today there are about a million and a half interracial marriages.)

Critics say this would simply add to the confusion. Who would it apply to in the US, where up to 90 percent of African Americans are believed to have at least one white ancestor? Recent genetic evidence also suggests that all Europeans (Caucasians) are a hybrid population, bearing genes which are 65 percent Asian in origin and 35 percent African. What sense does it make to create a "catch all" category for children of various combinations of mixed-race relationships? Is it logical, for example, to include a child whose parents are "Black" and "white" in the same classification with a child whose parents are Native Alaskan and Japanese?

The strongest criticism of the "multiracial" proposal has come from African Americans who believe it would diminish their influence and their share of federal grants by reducing their numbers. Ever since the 1960s, census statistics have been used to monitor and enforce legislation against discrimination and segregation, and to determine the way voting districts are drawn. The "one drop rule"

Activity

US Bureau of Census Racial Classifications (1990)

White
Black or Negro
American Indian
(Print name of enrolled or principal tribe)
Eskimo
Aleut
Asian or Pacific Islander
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Hawaiian
- Korean
- Vietnamese
- Japanese
- Asian Indian
- Samoan
- Guamanian
- Other

If other race, please print _____
Is this person of Spanish or Hispanic origin?
- No
- Yes
  - Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano
  - Puerto Rican
  - Cuban
  - Yes, other Spanish, Hispanic (for example, Argentinian, Columbian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard

Which of these categories is based on "race"? Nationality? Language? The class should divide into twos. Without talking to your partner, write down which of the above categories you think he or she belongs to. Also write down your own classification. Now compare lists. Are they the same? Do you think you belong to more than one category? What would you like to see changed on the Census form?

Activity

1951 UNESCO Statement on Race

Scientists are generally agreed that all men living today belong to a single species, Homo sapiens, and are derived from a common stock....Some of the physical differences between human groups are due to differences in hereditary constitution and some to differences in the environments in which they have been brought up. In most cases, both influences have been at work....

National, religious, geographical, linguistic and cultural groups do not necessarily coincide with racial groups; and the cultural traits of such groups have no demonstrated connection with racial traits. Americans are not a race, nor are Frenchmen, nor Germans.... Moslems and Jews are no more races than are Roman Catholics and Protestants....

Such a classification does not depend on any physical character, nor does, for example, skin color by itself necessarily distinguish one major group from another. Furthermore, so far as it has been possible to analyze them, the differences in physical structure which distinguish one major group from another give no support to popular notions of any general 'superiority' or 'inferiority' which are sometimes implied in referring to these groups....

The scientific material available to us at present does not justify the conclusion that inherited genetic differences are a major factor in producing the differences between the cultures and cultural achievements of different peoples or groups. It does indicate, on the contrary, that a major factor in explaining such differences is the cultural experience which each group has undergone....

There is no evidence for the existence of so-called 'pure' races....

Read this statement carefully. What does it mean? Why do you think a United Nations agency felt the need to issue such a statement in the aftermath of World War II?

finally seemed to produce some benefits, as it enlarged the number of people counted "Black" and increased their access to federal spending. Census statistics are used by federal programs assisting minority businesses, and other affirmative action and educational enrichment programs. They are also used to prevent "redlining" — the refusal of banks and other financial institutions to give mortgages and loans to residents of minority neighborhoods.

Opponents of the "multiracial" category feel that the long history of struggle behind "Black" as a racial designation should not be overlooked or thrown away — not, that is, until the system of racial hierarchy and white privilege are fully dismantled. A Clinton Administration task force has argued that such a category would "add to racial tensions and further fragmentation of our population," and has recommended that Americans be permitted to check more than one category to describe themselves on the census form.

Racism: what is it?

Many people in the United States believe that the country has already moved beyond racism, and created a level playing field for all to compete equally for society's benefits. In Unit Six of this curriculum, we will examine the evidence for this view. But first we have to define our terms.

We use the word **prejudice** to refer to individual attitudes towards a person or group based on preconceived notions which lead to judgments being formed without a consideration of the facts. People are **bigots** and act out of **bigotry** if they express open dislike and hatred of other groups. **Racial discrimination** refers to the exclusion of individuals and groups belonging to a particular race or ethnicity from certain jobs, neighborhoods, schools, and social opportunities. Openly racist societies, like the US South before the late 1960s and South Africa under the Apartheid system, give discrimination the force of law.

Racism as we will use it here (and as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., used the term), is not simply about the attitudes, dislikes, and motivation of individuals, or individual acts of bigotry and discrimination. Instead, racism refers to the way society as a whole is arranged, and how the economic, educational, cultural, and social rewards of that society are distributed. It is about collective injustice. No matter how much individual attitudes may change, we cannot defeat racism until we bring about structural and institutional change, and transform collective relationships between groups. There are no winners and losers in the battle against racism. Its defeat is not a victory for one particular group, but for society as a whole, and for us all as human beings.

Think back fifty years. When we look back at the segregated South in 1950, it's easy enough to make distinctions between prejudice, discrimination, and racism.

Imagine you were a white high school student in the Mississippi Delta. It would be hard for you not to have certain preconceived notions or prejudices about Black people, based on everything you are told in the white society which is your world. You aren't sure what to make of the few Chinese students in your school, which had been exclusively for whites a few years before. You were happy that they kept to themselves, since you believed all people should stick with their own kind.[4]

As for the **racism** which determined how society was arranged — who had wealth and power and who was poor and powerless — you probably didn't give it much thought. Wasn't that the way things had always been? You took it for granted that whites should be at the top, making the decisions, and that there would be **discrimination** along racial lines, keeping the races from sharing schools, neighborhoods and even cemeteries.

If you were a Black teenager whose family had moved from the South to the North fifty years ago, you probably experienced the same sort of prejudice and bigotry you had known in the South in your interactions with white society. But you were relieved that there was no open discrimination in the form of "whites only" signs, and that your parents were not turned away when they went to vote. In some schools Black and white children studied together. But there

was no denying that racism existed in the North as well as the South. Your family could find housing only in the ghetto, where everything was more expensive than in the adjacent white neighborhoods. Factory jobs paying decent wages went only to white people. There was no disguising the existence of a racial hierarchy, kept in place by social custom, and by economic and political power instead of by law.

As we shall see, the Movement of the 1950s and 60s made the South more like the North. It ended legal segregation and gave African Americans the vote. But it left the racial hierarchy in place. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. recognized as much when he said that the Civil Rights Movement did not go far enough and that the changes it made "were not really substantive changes....the roots of racism are very deep in America; our society is still structured on the basis of racism."[5]

That is what Dr. King told his staff in November 1966, a year and a half before he was assassinated at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. He had come to believe that the Movement must now work to close the wide economic gap, and was in Memphis organizing a march to demand better pay and conditions for sanitary workers.

What would he say if he were alive today? Would he maintain that our society is still structured on the basis of racism? Would he say a racial hierarchy was still in place? And if it is, what can we do about it?

Footnotes

1. Paul Hoffman, "The Science of Race," *Discover, Special Issue: The Science of Race*, November 1994.

2. In this resource we will capitalize Black when referring to the way people of African descent have chosen to describe themselves.

3. F. James Davis, *Who is Black? One Nation's Definition*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991, p. 173.

4. Chinese immigrants came to the Mississippi Delta after the Civil War and could not easily be fit into the existing black-white racial hierarchy. See Jim Loewen, *The Mississippi Chinese: Between Black and White*, 2nd edition, Waveland Press, 1988.

5. Quoted in D. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, Vintage Books, 1986, p. 537.

Definitions

Apartheid -- the Afrikaans word for "separateness." It referred to a system of racial separation and inequality, which enabled a small white minority to dominate the majority of people, who were classified as African or Colored.

Bigotry -- a state of mind in which prejudice and stereotypes (exaggerated generalizations and images about particular groups) produce often violently held opinions against certain groups and ideas. Bigotry is commonly racial, or takes the form of sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and **xenophobia** (hatred and suspicion of foreigners).

Colonization -- a process by which major trading nations took control of other countries in order to get raw materials, land, labor, and new markets.

Discrimination -- treating one particular group less favorably than another, often through laws and social policies which apply only to them. The group can be set apart becaue of its national origin or skin color.

Jim Crow -- a song and dance popularized by white minstrels in "black face" early in the 19th century. It refers to segregation laws introduced in the South in the late 19th century -- America's form of apartheid. The laws also stripped African Americans of the vote.

Prejudice -- forming judgments without considering factual information. Prejudice can take subtle forms or be openly proclaimed by extremist "hate" organizations.

Race -- a class of individuals descended from a common ancestor, who share common physical characteristics based on their adaptation to the intensity of sunlight and other environmental factors. There is no such thing as a "pure" race, and similarities between people of different racial groups far outweigh their differences.

Racism -- a term referring to a system of domination and control, in which institutions, social structures, and beliefs reflect the view that one race is superior to another.

Activity

The author of *What Does it Mean to be "White"?* has had an unusual background. What do you think of her understanding of what it is to be "white" in this society? Does anything she says relate to your own experience or thoughts?

What is meant by "white privilege"? Peggy McIntosh wrote a paper called "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (*Independent School*, Winter 1990). She discusses how she learned to see racism in terms of "invisible systems conferring dominance on my group," and not just as individual acts of meanness. She then gives a list of examples of this sort of white privilege, including such things as "I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of my race most of the time," and "If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area that I can afford and in which I would want to live." Some items on her list seem fairly obvious, such as: "I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented." Other may not seem so obvious: "I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group."

Peggy McIntosh believes that "whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege."

Do you agree with her? What items would you put on the list?

Project HIP-HOP Voices: What Does it Mean to be "White"?

I am a white female. When we first moved into Roxbury, I was excited because I was going to make new friends, go to a new school, and be living two blocks away from my best friend. I remember when we were moving in people would come up and ask us if we were the new family moving in. I didn't understand the looks. I just thought that people were not used to seeing families move in. Later, as I was talking to my mother about this, she recalls that the neighbors were neither angry or racist, but were just shocked that a white family would come and live with them.

There are other incidents. When I was 11, my mother sent me to the store to get formula for my baby cousin. As I was walking home, a police car stopped me and the officers asked if I was lost and if I needed a ride home. I responded that I was not lost and in fact I only lived a block away. Looking back I suppose it was a good thing that a police officer would stop and ask a child if they were lost, but I felt that he was automatically assuming that because I was white I could not live there. This was the first time my eyes were opened to the differences between white and Black people.

When I was in elementary and middle school I identified more with Black and Latino children. This was fine because when you are a child, color is not an issue. Sometimes I remember kids touching my hair and commenting on how it was softer and lighter (brown) than theirs. I went to the King Middle School which was mostly Black. Almost all of the whites in King were in advanced placement except for me because I had transferred from Timilty. So I was the only white female in my class. This still was not an issue for me, but it was an issue for some of the people in my class. Besides the looks, I would get pushed walking down to the cafeteria sometimes, or someone would slam my locker shut. At first I thought that it was because they didn't like me, but I gradually caught on that they didn't like my skin color.

The first years at Boston Latin were extremely hard for me. I was used to going to school with non-white people, now half of my grade was white. Not only were they white, but they were middle to upper class whites. I remember a friend asking me to come to her house. I had always called my apartment a house so I assumed this was what she meant. When she took me to her house, which was in West Roxbury, I don't think I kept my mouth closed the entire bus ride. Her family had three cars, a back and front yard, four floors in their house, and this was the part that amazed me the most: she had the same color carpet all through the house. I tried to play it off that I was used to living in such a great place but it didn't work that well. She kept asking if I was all right. Black people did not accept me because I was white, and white people did not accept me because I wasn't white enough.

As that first year ended, I had managed to make friends with the Black crowd. I still never let any of my friends come over to my house because I was ashamed of it. The first time a Black person from Latin invited me over to his house I was excited because I thought that he would be living just like me. As we pulled up to his house I just sat there and stared. His house was even bigger and more lavishly decorated than my white friend's house had been. I remember feeling almost betrayed. How could the Black group be rich? Weren't Black people supposed to be different?

When I was 14 I started seeing a guy named Keith. Keith was a guy I had known almost all of my life. He was two years older than me and he was Black. He won over many of my Black and Latino friends, but he didn't meet any of my white friends for some time. When my white friends found out that I was dating a Black guy, they were hurt that I hadn't told them. When I explained that I thought I would lose their friendship because he was Black, this hurt them even more. I lost some friends over this and I began to get really angry. Why did it matter? What does being "white" mean? Was this relationship more acceptable with my Black friends because they saw me more as a 'Black' white? I was not trying to be Black or white anymore, I was just being me.

Some whites like to live in a bubble. By this I mean that it is easier for them to think that everyone is treated fairly, and that Blacks are not as influential as whites because they do not try hard enough. A shared thought among white teenagers and their parents is "well, why don't they just get a job?" How can someone get a job, if they have a baby brother to look after, two younger siblings, and their mother works at a retail job that pays $6 an hour? A common scenario is that of a teenage mother with a child. The father has left, and the mother had to go on welfare. She has no money for day care so she can't get a job. She can't quit school because school offers day care. How can this girl get a job?

Many whites just want the easy fix without getting at the root of the problem. I think it's time for them to start looking at things in their complexity, and stop dealing just in stereotypes.

UNIT TWO: After Reconstruction

Before we can see clearly how far we have come, we must know where we have been. It is important to know our history, however painful it may be, and to learn how change came about. In Maya Angelou's words:

> History, despite its wrenching pain,
> Cannot be unlived, but if faced
> With courage, need not be lived again.
> *On the Pulse of Morning*

When we study history we find that it seldom moves in a straight line. Just when things seem to be getting better, there may be a loss of momentum, and a reverse of direction. That's what happened in the late 19th century when the gains of Reconstruction were rolled back. One hundred years later, we find ourselves in the middle of a similar roll back, this time of the gains of the Movement of 50s and 60s.

The promise of Reconstruction

The decade-long (1867-1877) period of Reconstruction which followed the Civil War can be seen as a second chance for the nation to live up to the ideals of equality expressed in the Declaration of Independence. Eric Foner in his book *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* called Reconstruction "a massive experiment in interracial democracy without precedent in the history of this or any other country that abolished slavery in the 19th century."[1]

Immediately after the Civil War, the newly-freed slaves took the initiative to pool their own meager resources to buy land and erect buildings for schools. They also organized mass meetings to demand equality and the vote.

By 1868 the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution had barred states from denying citizens "equal protection of the laws" and from depriving them of "life, liberty or property without due process of law." The Amendent gave male freedmen in the South the right to vote — this at a time when all women were deprived of the vote. The Fifteenth Amendment of 1870 extended the vote to African-American males in the North (and in so doing, angered white women, who were still without the vote).

Adult African-American males registered to vote in huge numbers and organized their own political groups. They went to the polls despite the terror perpetrated by the newly-formed Ku Klux Klan, which, to cite just one instance, killed some 2,000 African Americans in the few weeks before the 1868 elections in Louisiana. African-American delegates participated in substantial numbers in the constitutional conventions that were held in the Southern states to create state constitutions abolishing slavery. Between 1861and 1901, 22 African Americans sat in the US Congress, and there were 794 African-American representatives in state legislatures.

The defeat of Reconstruction

But there was hardly any progress on the economic front. Huge tracts of land had been confiscated by the federal government from Southern planters who fled their plantations during the Civil War. Both the destitute newly-freed slaves and landless poor whites had hoped to be given some of this land. The Freedmen's Bureau had plans to lease it to African Americans in forty-acre homesteads. But the government broke its promise, and instead gave most of the land back to its former owners and handed over another 100 million acres of federal land to the railways. After hundreds of years of enslavement African Americans were told to fend for themselves.

The government's decision to deny freedmen any measure of economic independence was a critical turning point in our country's history. Before long they had been forced back onto plantations under a system of economic serfdom called the sharecropping system. Black (and white) share-

Milestones of Reconstruction

The Thirteenth Amendment (1865)

The first part of this Amendment to the Constitution abolished slavery and "involuntary servitude." The second part stated that "Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

The Civil Rights Act (1866)

This Act gave citizenship and the equal benefit of the laws to all persons born in the US, with the exception of Indians. Cases arising from the violation of the rights of people once held in slavery would be tried in federal courts.

The Fourteenth Amendment (1868)

States were barred from denying citizens "equal protection of the laws" and from depriving them of "life, liberty or property without due process of law." The Amendment also gave *male* freedmen in the South the right to vote.

The Fifteenth Amendment (1870)

This Amendment extended the vote to African-American males in the North and prohibited the States from abridging voting rights.

The Enforcement Act (1870)

The 1866 Civil Rights Act was strengthened by this legislation, which gave federal courts additional penalties in cases of racially-motivated interference with voting rights.

The Ku Klux Klan Act (1871)

This act was intended to protect Black people from the Ku Klux Klan. Any person who deprived another of constitutional rights was liable to penalties in federal courts.

The Civil Rights Act (1875)

After five years in Congress, this act finally passed when sections barring segregation in schools and churches were dropped. It declared that all persons were entitled to equal enjoyment of public accommodations, such as trains, ships, theaters, hotels, waiting rooms, and businesses.

Rolling Back the Gains of Reconstruction

The Slaughterhouse Cases (1871)

In a 5-4 decision, the US Supreme Court ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment did NOT place the rights of citizens under federal protection. The decision said that the national government could not interfere with a state's "right" to fail to protect civil rights of citizens. If a state chose not to protect its citizens, that was its business.

Minor v. Happersett (1875)

Virginia Minor brought suit against an election official in Missouri who refused to accept her ballot when she attempted to vote. The Supreme Court declared unanimously that citizenship did not confer suffrage on anyone. The expansive definition of citizenship in the 14th Amendment was thus considerably narrowed, with dire results for African Americans as well as women. It was but a matter of time before Blacks were deprived of the vote by indirect means.

US v. Cruikshank (1876)

The Supreme Court unanimously ruled that it was the obligation of the states, not the federal government, to protect the rights of African Americans.

Hall v. DuCuir (1878)

The Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution's Commerce Clause (Article I, Section 8) prevented the states *from prohibiting segregation* on interstate railroads.

Civil Rights Cases (1883)

The Supreme Court, with one dissenting vote, declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional. The decision asserted that Blacks must no longer "be the special favorite of the laws." The dissent was written by Justice John Marshall Harlan, who argued that private racial discrimination was a badge of servitude which violated the 13th Amendment.

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)

The Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation was legal if facilities for the races were "separate but equal."

croppers were loaned small tracts of land for their own use in return for growing and picking cotton for their landlords. Usually they ended up hopelessly in debt.

At the same time, racism was being given a new "scientific" justification. In 1859 Charles Darwin published his pathbreaking description of the laws of evolution, *On the Origin of Species: The Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*. By the time of Reconstruction, Darwin's theory of evolution and "struggle for existence" had been popularized to support racial hierarchy. The so-called doctrine of "Social Darwinism" maintained that certain races were called naturally "superior" and others "inferior." White supremacists argued that the laws of nature required that African Americans be economically and socially subordinate to whites. Any other arrangement would, they said, be a violation of God's plan.

This sort of racist ideology contributed to the failure of Reconstruction. In the North, white workers feared that freedmen would come in huge numbers to compete for their jobs. Racism served the interests of those who wanted to keep the work force divided to maximize profits. In the South, Black workers were prevented from holding jobs alongside white workers, and shunned when they attempted to join the Southern Farmers' Alliance.

By the mid 1870s many one-time supporters of Reconstruction felt "enough had been done" for the freedmen and it was time to end federal intervention in the South and "return to normal." Rather than expand democracy, they wanted to expand the economy.

The closing decades of the 19th century are known as the "Gilded Age." It was a time of an unprecedented upsurge in greed and corruption, as the big industrialists consolidated their holdings in railways, oil, steel, and banks and made war on the trade unions. All of this was done in the name of "free enterprise," which held that there should be no interference with the "natural laws" that governed the marketplace. If the economic system gave riches to a few, while the many remained fearful for their jobs, so be it.

By 1877, when Reconstruction was officially at an end, one in five of the work force was totally unemployed, and only one in five could count on steady work. Instead of coming together to fight for their common interests, Black and white workers were pushed apart by racism.

The courts lead the way backwards

The history of Reconstruction has important lessons for the present. It teaches us that Constitutional Amendments and Congressional laws are not self-enforcing. Unless people know that they exist, and demand that they be implemented, these "guarantees" of civil rights and liberties can be stripped of meaning or simply ignored altogether.

The courts, then as today, reflected the public acceptance of injustice and the larger social, economic and political forces in society. Lower court judges and US Supreme Court justices in the 1870's and 1880's favored property rights over personal rights, and gave legitimacy to white supremacy. The courts were able to exploit the lack of agreement over what "equal rights" meant in practice in their interpretation of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments and Civil Rights Acts. They were also able to appeal to Americans' longstanding distrust of a centralizing national government to claim that under the Constitution, protection of rights properly belonged to the states. It was, the courts claimed, up to the states and not the federal government to decide whether African Americans had any rights worth protecting.[2]

To show what this meant in practice, in 1876 the US Supreme Court ruled unanimously in the case of *US v. Cruikshank* in favor of 96 members of a white mob who had massacred 60 Black posse members who had been guarding a courthouse in Louisiana. They could not be charged with murder in the state courts because the state government would not act, and they could not be charged in federal courts since murder was not a federal crime. So they were charged under the 1870 Civil Rights Enforcement Act with

interfering with the Black posse's rights of assembly, due process and equal protection of the laws. The Supreme Court, however, said it was the obligation of the states, not the federal government, to protect the rights of Blacks, and since the massacre was not perpetrated by state officials but by private citizens, the attackers should go free.

During the next twenty years the US Supreme Court permitted segregation and the disenfrachisement of African Americans and barred federal action against the Ku Klux Klan. The interest of the dominant class, both North and South, in rolling back African-American gains was especially intense in the 1890s, when it seemed that poor farmers might join forces across racial lines to oppose the big property holders.

In 1896 the Supreme Court put its stamp of approval on Jim Crow segregation in its decision in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In 1892 Homer Plessy got on a train in New Orleans to test an 1890 segregation law in Louisiana which ordered railways to provide separate carriages for whites. The railway companies were not happy with this law, since enforcing it meant extra work. They backed the test case. Plessy looked white (he later told the court he was "of mixed descent, in the proportion of seven eighths Caucasian and one eighth African blood"), and informed the train conductor that he was "a Negro" before refusing to move from the "whites only" carriage and being arrested.

In court Plessy claimed that the Louisiana law violated both the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the US Constitution. His lawyer asked, "will the court hold that a single drop of African blood is sufficient to color a whole ocean of Caucasian whiteness?" [3]

In its ruling the US Supreme Court drew in part from the case of *Roberts v. City of Boston*, which in 1850 had upheld the segregation of Boston's schools. With only one dissenting vote, the Court ruled that racial segregation was legal if facilities for the races were "separate but equal." Justice John Marshall Harlan, a former slaveowner, wrote these words in dissent:

"But in the view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful. The law regards man as man, and takes no account of his surroundings or of his color when his civil rights as guaranteed by the supreme law of the land are involved."

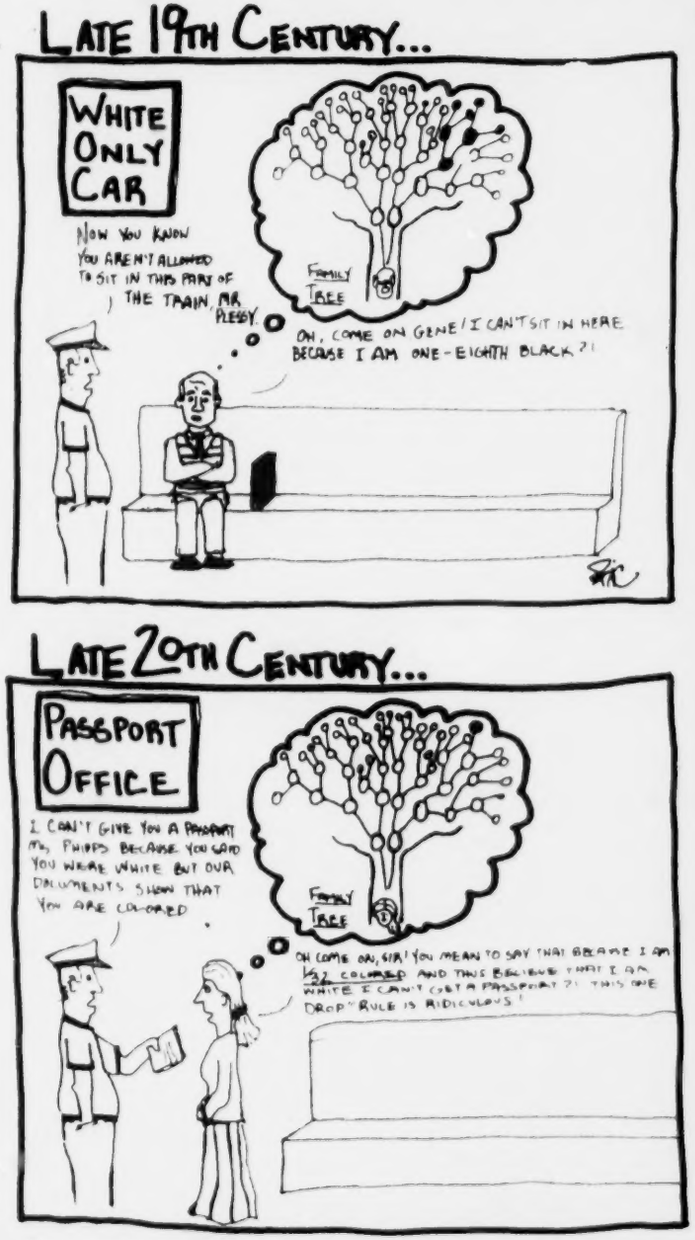
Harlan concluded that "the thin disguise of 'equal' accommodation...will not mislead anyone nor atone for the wrong this day done."

Two years later the Supreme Court ruled that a Mississippi plan to take the vote away from African Americans was not unconstitutional. Other Southern states followed Mississippi's example. Among the methods they used to deprive African Americans of the vote were poll taxes, grandfather clauses (which said only those people could vote whose grandfathers had been entitled to vote), and literacy tests and tests about the Constitution and government (which were seldom given to whites).

At the end of the century, in *Cumming v. Georgia*, the Supreme Court decided that a white high school did not have to be closed because a school district did not have the funds to maintain a school for African Americans. The myth of separate but "equal" was fully exposed.

Lynch law

Supreme Court rulings gave the green light to unspeakably brutal racial violence. White supremacists used fear as a tool of social control. Between 1889 and 1918, at least 3,224 people, mostly Black men, were hanged, beaten and burned to death by lynch mobs in both the North and South. The majority of the victims had never been formally charged with a crime. By the dawn of the 20th century vigilante violence had become a "natural" part of the American landscape. Desperate to awaken the national conscience, the


LATE 19TH CENTURY...
WHITE ONLY CAR
NOW YOU KNOW YOU AREN'T ALLOWED TO SIT IN THIS PART OF THE TRAIN, MR. PLESSY
FAMILY TREE
OH, COME ON GENE! I CAN'T SIT IN HERE BECAUSE I AM ONE-EIGHTH BLACK?!
LATE 20TH CENTURY...
PASSPORT OFFICE
I CAN'T GIVE YOU A PASSPORT MR. PHIPPS BECAUSE YOU SAID YOU WERE WHITE BUT OUR DOCUMENTS SHOW THAT YOU ARE COLORED
FAMILY TREE
OH COME ON, SIR! YOU MEAN TO SAY THAT BECAUSE I AM 1/32 COLORED AND THIS BELIEVE THAT I AM WHITE I CAN'T GET A PASSPORT?! THIS ONE DROP" RULE IS RIDICULOUS!

Activity

I watched an angry mob chain him to an iron stake. I watched them pile wood around his helpless body. I watched them pour gasoline on this wood. And I watched three men set this wood on fire. I stood in a crowd of 600 people as the flames gradually crept nearer and nearer to the helpless Negro. I watched the blaze climb higher and higher, encirling him without mercy. I heard his cry of agony as the flames reached him and set his clothing on fire.... Soon he became quiet. There was no doubt that he was dead.... An odor of burning flesh reached my nostrils. I felt suddenly sickened.... "I'm hungry," someone complained, "Let's get something to eat."

Crisis, November 1925

Back of the writhing, yelling, cruel-eyed demons who break, destroy, maim and lynch and burn at the stake is a knot, large or small, of normal human beings and these human beings at heart are desperately afraid of something. Of what? Of many things but usually of losing their jobs, of being declassed, degraded or actually disgraced; of losing their hopes, their savings, their plans for their children; of the actual pangs of hunger; of dirt, of crime. And of all this, most ubiquitous in modern industrial society is that fear of unemployment."

W.E.B. DuBois, "The Shape of Fear, " *North American Review*, June 1926

A scene similar to the one described in the NAACP publication Crisis *has been repeated literally thousands of times in the US since the late 19th century. How could such things have happened with so little public outcry? How convincing is the explanation for lynching given by W.E.B. DuBois? If fear lies behind this sort of group behavior, what outlets are people finding for their fears today? Do you think that racism and fear are still related? Give examples.*

NAACP placed an ad in a newspaper in 1922 which read: "Do you know that the US is the only land on Earth where human beings are BURNED AT THE STAKE?"

This message fell on deaf ears. Attempts to get Congress to pass a federal law against lynching failed. Racial violence took the form of organized pogroms in many Northern cities as World War I ended, and African American soldiers returned home. White workers feared their competition for jobs and housing. Racial ideology blinded them to the benefits of rising above the politics of divide and rule and led to major race riots with large loss of life in East St. Louis, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Knoxville, Omaha and other cities.

The destruction of the African-American community of Rosewood, Florida -- the subject of a recent film -- occurred on a larger scale in 1921 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A mob of 10,000 whites used machine guns and airplanes to attack a prosperous neighborhood known as "Little Africa." They destroyed 18,000 homes. They also ran into strong Black resistance. At least 50 whites and 200 African Americans were killed — some estimates are far higher.

The catalyst for the destruction in Tulsa was the rumor of an assault on a white woman by a Black man. But the underlying reason was white envy at Black economic advances in the area referred to as "Black Wall Street," in particular the fact that some 500 Blacks owned parcels of land containing oil. The African-American historian John Hope Franklin, who came to Tulsa as a child four years after the attack, maintained that by fighting back, African Americans had broken through the fear which had been used to keep them in "their place." He wrote that "the self-confidence of Tulsa's Negroes soared, their businesses prospered, their institutions flourished, and they simply had no fear of whites."[4]

Fifty years later, African Americans all over the South would find new ways to overcome the fear — and would build the Movement.

Footnotes

1. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, Harper & Row, 1988, p. xxv.

2. On the subject of the Fourteenth Amendment, see Howard Meyer, *The Amendment that Refused to Die*, Chilton Book Company, 1973.

3. A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. *Shades of Freedom: Racial Politics and Presumptions of the American Legal System*, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 112.

4. Quoted in Herbert Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1988, p. 185.

Definitions

Caste -- a social class, usually based on birth, separated from others by distinctions of rank, profession or wealth

Ideology -- a set of beliefs which form the basis of a political or economic system, or reflect the outlook and aspirations of a particular group or culture. The ideology of **white supremacy,** the belief that whites constitute a superior race, prevailed in the South before and after Reconstruction.

Pogrom -- an organized attack on or massacre of a minority group. Often such attacks are a result of **scapegoating** and are given official encouragement, as they were in the Russian Empire under the Czars, with Jews as the target. Individuals or groups are scapegoated when they are made to bear blame for shortcomings and social problems whose origins lie elsewhere.

Vigilante -- a person who takes law enforcement into his or her own hands. Lynchings were a form of vigilantism used to instill fear and ensure domination and social control.

Project HIP-HOP Voices:

The Importance of Confronting History

Look around you. I mean *really* look around. Step out of your comfort zone, and see America's educational systems for what they really are: institutions satisfied with hiding truths, and disinterested in change.

I was raised in a small town in southern Massachusetts. I attended a private kindergarten and first grade, but after that it was public elementary school for me. I remember being the only Black student in the school for awhile, until my younger sister entered. It was always difficult as a child to find a happy medium between the pro-Blackness and Black Pride I experienced at home, and the lily whiteness that was ever present at school.

Black History Month at home was filled with *Eyes on the Prize* and other cultural presentations on PBS. At school, my teachers would pass around flash cards with pictures and biographies of "Outstanding Negroes," featuring the ever-present Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. We were told of a time long ago, when a woman was exhausted after a long day at work, and because of her tiredness refused to give up her seat and ironically started a movement. We never learned of her social commitment, and that she had gone to the Highlander Center to get experience organizing for social change.

We were also briefed on a man who was an exception and a "credit to the race," the most important man in the struggle, Dr. King. By the time I graduated from elementary school, I could tell you plenty about Rosa Parks or Martin Luther King, but ask me about anyone else like Marcus Garvey or Fannie Lou Hamer, and I was lost.

For junior high and high school, I returned to private school. There I found a new way for a school to tackle Black History. The first Monday of Black History Month, the Headmaster would read the "I have a dream" speech to the entire school, and then we would be dismissed back to classes. Nothing further was explored in class; nothing was added to the school day. It's funny how we can bend over backwards to accommodate topics like drunk driving and date rape, even in the classroom, and when Black History Month comes around, there's no time to add anything to the curriculum.

Right before I heard about Project HIP-HOP, I had come to the realization that if I wanted to learn about the history of my people, I would have to find a way to do that on my own. I remember all the anger I felt, and the hurt. The history of Blacks in this country is a story of pride, of struggle and of perseverance. It's a story that has its highs and lows, a story with parts that make you want to cry, and parts that make you want to shout for joy. But the most important thing about Black History is that it is *America's history*. It's the history of Black America as well as white America, and everyone else who inhabits this country.

When America remembers certain parts of its history, it likes to label them the "never, ever again" parts — this applies to slavery, the internment of Japanese Americans, and Jim Crow segregation. Well, I have to ask myself, is the country really seeing the error of her ways?

Think about it. If society really cared about preventing past horrors from happening again, don't you think there would be an urgency about educating our young about these matters? We, America's future, should not be forced to learn about history on our own time. Everyone should be learning about the problems we are still experiencing, with roots in the past.

We should be facing the past courageously, and boldly making the personal commitment to ourselves and each other, that what happened in our past will never, ever happen again, and the racism which made it possible will be completely uprooted.

Project HIP-HOP Voices

We went to Helen Keller's birthplace inTuscumbia, Alabama. Although Helen Keller had been a socialist and had supported the NAACP, the museum did not have any exhibits on this part of her life. In fact it didn't mention it at all. It just talked about the work Helen Keller did raising funds for the blind and deaf. There was a confederate flag against the wall behind a bust of Helen Keller — this to commemorate someone who supported the equality of Black people! The tour guide, who was also the curator, did not know anything about Helen Keller's other activities. The place makes me realize how distorted history really is. The Southerners (and Northerners) are always denying history. They just don't face reality and the truth.

How important is it to face "reality and truth" ? Do you think we should confront all aspects of our history? Or do you think there are some things which we should not dwell on because they are so painful?

What would you like to learn more about at school? How do you think that textbooks disguise history -- and why?

Project HIP-HOP Voices

Terrorism plagued the South. The Ku Klux Klan, as well as individuals, with subtle support from police and state officials, lynched, burned, and intimidated African Americans across the South. Young Black men and women would leave for school or go to the store and never return. Their bodies may never be found, their stories would possibly never be told.

Both Blacks and whites were trapped in the segregated South by fear. Blacks were constrained by the fear of groups like the KKK and police who continually subjugated them severely to prevent any attempt at fighting against the system. Many whites were also trapped by fear, but this fear was of losing whatever privileges they might have in a society based on white supremacy. Both Blacks and whites had to overcome fear in order for change to occur: for one group a fear of terror; for the other group a fear of the unknown. People had to fight for social change at three different levels: the legislature, courts, and streets.

If it is hard getting things moving today, how much more difficult must it have been earlier this century, when people would lose everything, even their lives, if they tried to bring about change? Or was it easier then, because the things that had to be changed seemed so very clear and people felt they had relatively little to lose?

Is it in fact harder today because things aren't clear at all, and we have no sense of where we are headed and what our priorities should be? Is the alternative -- being satisfied with the status quo -- simply too attractive? Are we too dazzled by money, fashion, and success? Have we lost the sense of urgency and struggle?

What would it take to turn this situation around?

UNIT THREE: Building Momentum for Change

What does it take to create a movement? Where does social change come from? How can people rise above the terror that has been used to control them and keep them in "their place"?

What we know as the Movement of the 1950s and 60s did not arise out of thin air. The way had been prepared for it by both historical and economic circumstances, and by the brave actions of individuals who had, for example, challenged segregation on the buses in Birmingham at least 50 times in the period 1941-42. The way was also prepared by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which was formed in 1910, the Urban League (formed in 1911), the Congress of Racial Equality or CORE (1943), and other organizations which developed strategies for overturning Jim Crow segregation. Action in the streets, the courts, and legislatures finally resulted in a powerful mobilization for freedom and the expansion of democracy that served as the catalyst for the entire "rights revolution" — the women's movement, student movement, the movement for rights for gays and lesbians, for the disabled, for Latinos, Asians and other ethnic groups — and inspired "pro-democracy movements" around the world.

Changing circumstances

Early in the 20th century 90 percent of African Americans lived in the South, where they made up a third of the population. This was soon to change. By 1920 half a million Black people had left the South. Nearly a million more left in the 1920s, seeking a better life and new job opportunities in the North. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, millions were forced off the land as Southern agriculture collapsed. They lived in desperate circumstances, since the government's New Deal programs initially excluded African Americans. This migration from the land continued during the war years of the 1940s, as African Americans moved to northern and newly industrialized southern cities seeking jobs in the defense industries. The mechanization of agriculture in the South broke up the old sharecropping system and and ended the need for Southern planters to have a source of labor tied to the land. The old rigid caste system which had seemed so permanent a few decades before was crumbling, freeing African-Americans to look for new ways of earning a livelihood. By 1960 half of the African- American population lived in Northern urban areas.[1]

This huge shift of population set in motion many other changes, some of them violent. There were bloody race riots in many Northern cities when Black workers tried to get good factory jobs reserved for white workers, and when they tried to move into white residential areas.Trade unions refused to admit Black workers, and agencies of the government, such as the Federal Public Housing Authority, enforced racial segregation.[2]

Taking action

But changing circumstances also brought new opportunities for activism. In the North, African Americans could exercise their right to vote, and could not be ignored by politicians. During the years of World War II, African-American labor was needed in defense factories and the threat of civil unrest at home harmed the war effort. In January 1941, when A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, announced plans for a mass march in Washington to protest discrimination in the defense industry, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 to head off the march. This Order barred racial discrimination in government employment and the defense industries.

The potential of mass action to bring about change was demonstrated, even though this 1941 march on Washington never took place. The same year saw the first use of civil

disobedience to combat racial segregation,when a mixed group of former students from Antioch College entered a legally-segregated swimming pool at Garfield Park near Cleveland, Ohio, and then left peacefully. These students had adopted the techniques of nonviolent resistance pioneered by Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi was born in India in 1869 and emigrated to South Africa in 1893, where he was a successful lawyer. Here he developed techniques of nonviolent resistance to campaign for equal rights for Indians. He then returned to India and fought British colonialism with civil disobediance — passive acts of noncooperation and defiance which were intended to induce shame in the colonizers.

The civil disobedience at Garfield Park inspired James Farmer, an African-American leader of Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). FOR's roots were in the Quaker tradition of working for racial equality through peaceful means. After discussing the significance of the Garfield Park action, Farmer, George Houser, and Bayard Rustin formed the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to develop nonviolent civil disobedience as a strategy to combat racial injustice.

The war against racism

In 1941, the year of Garfield Park and of Randolph's planned march on Washington, the US went to war. Over a million African Americans served in the segregated US army during World War II. Half served overseas, and many were politically awakened by the experience. They were risking and often giving their lives to defeat Nazism and its pursuit of racial purity. At the same time, the Red Cross was keeping separate containers of "white blood" and "black blood" for the US troops. How could Black soldiers be expected to fight for freedom, democracy, and an end to a murderous racism abroad, and submit to lynchings, segregation, and disenfranchisement at home?

After the war was over, the US was the dominant power on the world stage. As European colonial empires fell apart, and independent nations emerged in Africa and Asia, the US posed as the champion of these new countries — but what about its own racist practices? How could it justify these in the eyes of the world and the new United Nations? And how in the early years of the Cold War with the Soviet Union could it convince these countries that its way of life was superior to Communism, while the Communists denounced its treatment of Black people?

As Jim Crow became an increasing embarrassment to US policy-makers, they realized they had to act. In 1948, a year after the baseball player Jackie Robinson had integrated the major leagues, President Truman insisted on a civil rights plank in the platform of the Democratic Party, leading prominent Southern Democrats to form a States' Rights Party (the "Dixiecrats"). The same Strom Thurmond who was re-elected to the US Senate in 1996, aged 96,was the Dixiecrat candidate for President. After Truman won the 1948 election, he issued an Executive Order barring discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin in federal employment. Change was in the air.

Courts take on Jim Crow

Change was beginning to happen through the courts before World War II, thanks to legal challenges mounted by NAACP Legal Defense Fund attorneys led by Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall. At first the NAACP adopted the strategy of asking the courts to make sure that the "separate but *equal*" doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson* was properly enforced; it didn't immediately try to get *Plessy* declared unconstitutional. In 1938 the US Supreme Court ordered Missouri to provide "equal" facilities for African-American law students. In 1950 the Supreme Court ordered state graduate schools for different races to be authentically "equal."

By this time NAACP lawyers had decided to seek to overturn *Plessy* and the concept of "separate but equal." They were encouraged by a courageous South Carolina

Project HIP-HOP Vocies

On our trip South I was surprised to learn that some white people didn't go along with racism in the 19th century. Our first stop was Harper's Ferry, which is now in West Virginia. It was in Virginia just before the Civil War when John Brown led his sons and about 20 other people in a raid. He thought if he captured the weapons in the federal arsenal there this would lead to a general slave uprising. He wanted to arm the slaves and overthrow slavery. Well, it wasn't such a great plan, as Frederick Douglass told him, and he ended up getting captured inside a building we saw. But he didn't seem to regret what he did. His final words before he was hanged showed he felt he had done the right thing. He was willing to die to help end the sin of slavery.

I guess John Brown is in some of the history books, although he might not always be shown as a hero. But other white people who made sacrifices seem to be forgotten. We did some research for the historian Jim Loewen, who is writing a book on how people and events are remembered through memorials and museums. He asked us to see if there was still a marble marker standing in a small town in Mississippi called Hazlehurst. The marker was for a man called John Prentiss Matthews. He was from Hazlehurst. I was really surprised to learn there were white people like him in the South just after the Civil War. He believed that African Americans should have the same rights as white people. He started a political party which had the support of black people and many poor white farmers. When he went to vote, he was shot dead, I guess because he was trying to bring white people and black people together.

We found the marker to him -- at least it is still there, even if it doesn't say how he died or what he stood for.

Activity

Judge Julius Waties Waring of Charleston, South Carolina was born in 1880. He was the son of a slaveholder and had the kind of "aristocratic" upbringing typical of the Southern white establishment. But as a judge, he gradually turned against many of the ideas he had grown up with. By the 1940s he had come to believe that the racial hierarchy in the South was unjust.

"There is absolutely no reasonable explanation for racial prejudice," he wrote in his dissent in a 1951 test of "separate but equal," *Briggs v. Elliot*. "It is all caused by unreasoning emotional reactions and these are gained early in childhood...Segregation in education can never produce equality and...is an evil that must be eradicated."

Waring's opinions shocked white society in South Carolina and around the South. He received death threats, was socially shunned, and had a cross burned on his lawn.

What does it take to stand out against public opinion in this way? Have you ever been in a situation in which you have taken a stand which made you unpopular? Can you imagine a situation in which you would take such a stand?

Divide into small groups. Each group should create an improvisation in which one member of the group goes against prevailing opinion. What are the consequences likely to be of such an act? What are the rewards -- if any?

judge, J. Waties Waring, who opposed racial segregation. The group of five education cases which reached the US Supreme Court under the name *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* began with *Briggs v. Elliot* in South Carolina's Clarendon County. In that county, where there were three times as many Black students as white students, per capita spending on white students was $179 per year, while spending on African-American students was only $43 per year.

Thurgood Marshall argued *Brown v. Board* before a US Supreme Court crowded with spectators in December 1952. In May 1954, the newly-appointed Chief Justice Earl Warren read the Court's opinion: "We conclude, unanimously, that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Fifty-eight years after it became law of the land, *Plessy v. Ferguson* was ruled unconstitutional. [3]

However, the Court did not order desegregation to take place immediately. A year later, in announcing how its ruling should be implemented, it adopted a "go slow" approach and asked local officials and judges to develop desegregation plans "with all deliberate speed." Whatever it had in mind, the Court in effect bought time for Southern school district officials to figure out how to avoid integrating their schools and other facilities. Since public opinion polls showed that 80 percent of white people in the South opposed *Brown*, they could count on public support.

It would take action in the streets, as well as the courts, to bring segregation to an end. But for the time being, the "streets" in much of the South still belonged to the Ku Klux Klan -- as the murder in the Mississippi Delta of a 14 year-old boy from Chicago attested. Emmett Till was brutally killed in August 1955 because he allegedly said "bye" to a white woman. An all-white jury acquitted the two white men identified in court as his murderers. They later admitted that they had killed him. It seemed to be business as usual in the South.

Footnotes

1. A good source for this period aimed at younger readers is Joe Williams Trotter, Jr., *From a Raw Deal to a New Deal? African Americans, 1929 - 1945*, Oxford University Press, 1996; see also Sean Dennis Cashman, *African Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1990 - 1990*, NYU Press, 1991.

2. See Herbert Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

3. The most comprehensive -- yet readable -- account of the legal challenge climaxing in *Brown* is Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality*, Vintage Books, 1975.

Definitions

Catalyst -- something that gets things moving. Saying that the Movement for rights for African Americans was a catalyst for the **"rights revolution"** means it led to an expansive interpretation of the Bill of Rights under US Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren, which enlarged the rights of all Americans in the 1960s and 70s.

Desegregation -- the process of undoing "separate but equal," especially in schools. The courts led the way in ordering schools to desegregate, without spelling out adequately what a desegregated school would look like and how it could be achieved.

New Deal -- government-initiated programs undertaken in the 1930s by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to put people back to work and get the economy moving out of the Depression which began in 1929.

Movement Voices: Overcoming Fear

Hollis Watkins was the 12th child born to sharecroppers in Southwest Mississippi. He was 19 when he met Bob Moses and other activists in McComb, Mississippi and became involved in Movement activities as part of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). He was immediately — and repeatedly — jailed, generally for stints of 40 days. His stories, and his songs, gave us an insight into the kind of mental outlook which helped Movement activists overcome fear in a part of the country known for its lynchings and racist brutality.

While we were working in the Delta, we were thrown in jail, and then taken to the County Farm to work along the roads. While we were out there on the work sites, we would be threatened by whites passing by. They would aim their guns at us and tell us they were going to shoot.

We decided that we would overcome the Big F and go on hunger strike. One reason for the fear was that we had been shown a wide leather strap with big holes in it. We were told that they would whip us when we were naked, and the holes would create suction, and when they snapped it off of you the skin would blister up and pop. They also had a board with nails driven through, and a leather strap to tie it to the hand so they could beat you with it. It was kind of frightening to young people, but we decided to chance it. We told them we wouldn't eat or work until we were moved from the County Farm. They threatened us, but we refused to come out and go to work. They asked to talk to the leader of our group — we said which one? They said the leader; we said we all are the leaders. After two days, they shipped us out of the County Farm to Parchman prison.

The superintendent came to see us himself. He said that in Parchman we would be calling him daddy and crying for mercy. He said we would be thrown in the hole. He said it sometimes gets so hot in the hole that sweat just rolls off the walls. Then he told us, "Get how you got when you came into the world." So we all had to get like that — pull off everything. Then they put all 14 of us in a cell built for two.

Eventually, they put all of us in solitary confinement, and we saw that it did get so hot that the walls began to sweat. The only place you could get air was a little crack at the bottom of the door. They kept us there for 24 hours. One of the brothers passed out. By the time they came to get him, he had a temperature of 104 degrees. They gave him an aspirin.

They constantly threatened to kill us while we were there. We figured out if we went into the hole in groups of no more than three, it wouldn't be so bad. So we would ask, one by one, to go into the hole. In the beginning, they accommodated us. We just sang at the top of our lungs while we were in the hole, and it made them so angry. They would say, what are you doing singing in there, shut up! We'd say, we're already in the hole, what are you going to do to us? They were so mad they'd take us out, and wouldn't put us back in when we asked. So we took the weapon of the hole away from them in the mental battle.

Once in McComb when I was arrested, I was separated from the other students and taken to a small room. They had what I guess was some kind of judge in that room, and about eight guys who looked like they worked in an oil field. They were going to make me say "yes sir" and "no sir" to them, and I refused to do that. When I refused they moved close to me and threatened me and I started making a sentence out of my answers, instead of saying "yes sir," and "no sir." After that, they put me in another room. About ten minutes later, the door opened, and three men walked in in plain clothes. They had a rope in their hands, with a hanging noose tied in it. There was a little red ribbon at the end of the noose.

"OK, nigger get up, we're going to have a hanging tonight, and you're going to be first." I just leaned back in the chair, looked at them and smiled. After I looked them in the eye for a while, they turned around and went out. So I never was hanged.

Hollis Watkins to Project HIP-HOP, July 18, 1997

Activity

Have you ever been in a situation where you had to overcome fear? How did you do it?

Imagine what it must have been like to grow up in a society where fear was used to unite white society and keep Blacks in their place at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. What would it take to overcome that sort of fear — fear which was part of the landscape and the air you breathed? People who tried to get the practice of lynching stopped, like the courageous African-American journalist Ida B. Wells Barnett, were often themselves attacked and forced to leave town — or worse. When fear is reinforced with brutal retaliation, how do you begin to change things?

How do you think you would have reacted if faced with some of the situations described by Hollis Watkins? Try to imagine yourself in his situation. Do you think that being part of a group would help you do things you might otherwise be afraid to do? Why? Why do you think singing was so important to Movement activists?

We asked Hollis Watkins if he ever felt overwhelmed, and felt his commitment getting shaky?

"I never questioned my commitment," he told us. "There were times when I was afraid, but I knew I had to do it anyway. I was more afraid of what might happen if I didn't do it than if I did."

What do you think he meant by that statement?

"We want the world to know that we no longer accept the inferior position of second-class citizenship. We are willing to be ridiculed, spat upon and even suffer physical violence to obtain First Class Citizenship."

SNCC Newsletter, 1960

UNIT FOUR: The Movement for Civil Rights

"What is fresh, what is new in your fight is the fact that it was initiated, led, and sustained by students. What is new is that American students have come of age. You now take your honored places in the world-wide struggle for freedom."

Martin Luther King, Jr. to a North Carolina rally, February 16, 1960

When Project HIP-HOP gives presentations on the Movement of the 1950s and 60s, we like to talk about two campaigns, one against segregation, and one for voting rights. We regard the Movement, whose larger aim is human rights, as something that should not be confined to the single decade of 1955-1965. In light of how much of the Movement's "unfinished business" remains, we see the Movement as ongoing, as something in which we can take part.

This history, then, becomes our tool. We can take from these stories information we can use today — about effective organizing, successful strategizing, what it means to be a good leader. "Freedom," said Diane Nash, "is people realizing that they are their own leaders....The answer is in each of us." [1] We learn about the role played by young people, like Diane Nash, who was 18 years old when she organized the Freedom Rides. And when we learn about the difficulties our predecessors faced, we can also feel a deep appreciation for what they endured and overcame.

The fight against segregation

Project HIP-HOP has visited both the South and South Africa. The word "apartheid," Afrikaans for "separateness," originated in South Africa, where Blacks were not allowed to live where whites lived, they couldn't attend schools set apart for white people, and they were kept out of facilities reserved for white people. The idea was to maintain two separate societies in one nation, one black and one white. Whites controlled the bulk of the land, the resources, and the money and were determined to keep Black people out of power.

Though the connection usually isn't made, many aspects of the apartheid system existed in the United States before the 1960s. Not only were Blacks and whites forcibly separated, but power — economic and political — remained in white hands. The political and economic system — the government, corporations, the media, etc. — mainly served white people. Even in the 1940s and 50s, many whites saw the "Negro" as having no better function than serving white people. That, anyway, was the assumption under which the American social structure operated.

But there was a big difference between the United States and South Africa. In South Africa, apartheid was the highest law of the land before it was ended in the 1990s. But in the US, on paper at least, the Constitution and Bill of Rights gave all Americans certain rights, including the vote and the right to be treated equally before the law. The Movement was about making those rights more than a piece of paper.

What follows are some of the key sites of the Project HIP-HOP itinerary.

The Montgomery bus boycott

If students know little else about the Movement, they have generally heard the name Rosa Parks. On December 1, 1955 this 43-year-old seamstress boarded a Cleveland Avenue bus and sat in the first seat just behind the white section. At that time, in Montgomery, it was illegal for African Americans to ride in the front of the bus. They had to pay their fare at the front, but then had to re-board the bus at the back. And if white people were standing, Blacks, as second-class citizens, had to give up their own seats. This particular bus was soon filled with white people. A white man was left

standing. The bus driver ordered the Black riders to give their seats up. All but Parks obeyed. The police were called in and she was arrested.

Rosa Parks is often portrayed as a tired woman, too exhausted after a long day's work to move. The reality is that Parks was well aware of what she was doing. She had been the first Secretary for the Alabama State Conference of NAACP branches. The summer before her refusal to move on the bus, she had attended a workshop at the Highlander Center in Tennessee, a training center for organizing.

There was also a history in Montgomery of such individual acts of resistance. Claudette Colvin, for example, a 15-year-old high-school sophomore, had seven months earlier refused to give her seat up for a white person. She too was arrested. The police had even paraded her before her schoolmates while she sat in the back of their car. Colvin later joined the NAACP's youth branch in Montgomery, which Rosa Parks had founded.

The Black community quickly mobilized in support of Parks. The NAACP saw in her case an opportunity to attack segregation in the courts. Jo Ann Robinson and the Women's Political Council organized a one-day bus boycott which, with the help of an alliance of ministers, grew to become a 381-day boycott. The strategy was direct economic action. The Black community would not ride the buses. People walked miles to work, they organized car-pools involving 150 vehicles, drove wagons, and even rode mules. But they kept off the buses. Their commitment to civil rights outweighed the difficulty they had to endure.

Black churches became centers for organizing and renewal. A group of ministers organized the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) to carry out the boycott. A new minister in Birmingham, 26-year-old Martin Luther King, pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, was nominated president. The organizing in Montgomery crossed class lines, and brought the entire African-American community together.

The white power structure reacted sharply against this affront to their power. The Black community in Montgomery was, in effect, demanding equal treatment. They wanted to be able to sit where they wanted to. Whites feared that if they let Blacks sit in the front of the bus, they would demand more rights. They might even want a share of the economic and political power.

The mayor thus began a "get-tough" policy, which really meant an official policy of harassment. Many Blacks who participated in the boycott were fired from their jobs, police targeted car-poolers with trumped-up tickets, some African Americans were physically attacked, and the home of Dr. King was bombed. Despite this, the boycotters prevailed.

Movement veteran Hollis Watkins has told us that one of the hardest obstacles Movement activists had to face was their own fear. But once fear ("the big F," Hollis calls it) was overcome, activists could focus on their aims. During the boycott, a Montgomery jury indicted 89 ministers, including King, with a rarely-used law. Rather than await arrest, the boycotters immediately went to the courthouse and asked to be charged. This was an example of how protesters not only faced fear, but claimed their own power.

The success of the year-long boycott surprised everyone. The strategy of economic action devastated Montgomery. The bus company lost 65 percent of its income. Because of the restricted travel of Blacks, downtown stores lost over a million dollars in sales, and the US Supreme Court, at long last, declared bus segregation unconstitutional.

Today, Montgomery is the site of a beautiful Civil Rights Memorial, which remembers those who lost their lives in the struggle.

The sit-in movement

The Movement erupted on many fronts. Campaigns in one state inspired similar protests in another. Soon, what began as local demands for civil rights assumed a more national face. A national Movement was taking shape. For example, when four black students from an historically-

Movement Voices

"I made a choice at age 18 to leave Howard University and work for change. I had to become more serious when I took on the responsibility of tampering with people's lives...Every time I took someone down to the court house to register to vote, I risked their lives and their jobs. After you see so much death and violence and hatred, you can get knocked out, never to recover.

"Like other students in the sit-ins, etc., I took big risks. We made a whole other level of commitment, which is why things changed. The struggle for us was about building humanity and building families and building community, not about destruction. Today we need to go back to the basics. We need to go back to learning our history."

Cleveland Sellers to Project HIP-HOP, July 10, 1997

"The vast majority of people involved in the Civil Rights Movement were young people. The environment now is not much different than in the 60s. But the major difference is that then there was an organization young people could get into and be in charge of to some degree."

Hollis Watkins to Project HIP-HOP, July 18, 1997

"Today we need to deal with issues at local levels, and at a historical juncture the right issue will hit and we can rally to it. We cannot create a wave, but we must equip ourselves mentally and physically to ride the wave when the wave comes. No one knew when the sit-ins started that a wave was coming. National movements come at key points in history -- we must be prepared."

Rev. Harold Middlebrook to Project HIP-HOP, July 24, 1997

Project HIP-HOP Voices

If I were a child of the Movement, I would want someone to help me. I would begin to wonder why I had to live in *this* house, drink from *this* fountain, go to *this* school. I would wish that Momma and Daddy could protect me. I would dream that I could walk to school and not be cursed and kicked by adults.

Just because of my color.

If I were a child of the Movement, I would wish that my brother could once again tease me, or pull my hair. I would wish that life could be the same as it was before he was taken.

Before he died for the cause.

If I were a child of the Movement, I would wish people would stop telling me to "shhh" or "be quiet, girl," or "don't look him in the eyes, or he'll shoot you." I would plan to be invisible, because I was scared.

I would want to live.

If I were a child of the Movement, I would want all other children to stop playing and look at me, the real me, not my color. I would want to be on everyone's mind, always, occupying everyone's thoughts until they could bear it no longer.

I would just want to be free.

Many people felt that young people, especially small children, should not have been on the front lines of non violent direct action campaigns. Malcolm X, for instance, said he didn't think that "young students should be sent into Mississippi, Alabama and these other places without some kind of protection" (February 11, 1965).

What do you think about the role played by youth? Would the Movement have been so effective without it?

Black North Carolina college practiced a form of nonviolent direct action, a sit-in, their example inspired student sit-ins throughout the South.

On February 1, 1960, four Black freshmen from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College walked into a local Woolworth's. The students wanted to challenge the segregation laws. They intended to show how ridiculous the segregation laws were. They made sure to buy a few items at the store counter, like toothpaste and school supplies. Then they sat at the lunch counter, aware that the state prohibited African Americans from being served.

When the waitress told them, "I'm sorry. We don't serve coloreds here," one student, Ezell Blair, Jr., replied, "I beg to disagree with you. We've in fact already been served; you've served us at a store counter two feet from here." The point was a poignant one, that segregation made no real sense. The waitress ignored the students, but they remained seated until the store closed. The next day they returned, this time reinforced by some 20 fellow students, including four women from near by Bennett College.

The sit-in continued a third day. White students began taking part in the protest. Students soon filled the Woolworth's. After a bomb threat and two weeks of sit-ins, Woolworth's shut its doors. But by then, the sit-in had spread to an S. H. Kress store nearby. In two months the sit-in movement was active in 54 cities in nine states. Even in New York, Woolworth's stores were picketed by white Columbia students.

When Project HIP-HOP first visited Greensboro in 1993, we sat at the Woolworth's counter where the sit-ins began. Since then, the Greensboro Woolworth's has been closed. Some of the stools have been moved to the Greensboro Museum, and others taken to the Smithsonian.

The Movement strategy of nonviolence

"Nonviolent direct action," wrote Dr. King in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, "seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to dramatize the issue that can no longer be ignored." [2]

There was nothing passive about this form of confrontation. Instead, it was a way of facing injustice and violence head on, in an attempt to persuade oppressors — and the nation — of the injustice of their actions.

This strategy proved effective. But it required rigorous training. There were nonviolence workshops which taught students how to conduct themselves. "Sit straight," for example, or "Don't laugh," or "Don't curse." As sit-ins became more popular, whites began their own campaign of harassment. As in the bus boycott, whites felt threatened by this display of student power. They began to heckle the students, yelling "nigger" at Blacks and "nigger lover" at whites. They threw food and condiments at the students. Some even ground their cigarettes into the backs of protesters. The police hit the students with billy clubs, let the dogs loose on them, and used tear gas to blind them.

Throughout all this the students had to remain disciplined. They could not retaliate. They had to keep in mind that not only the white hecklers, but the white power structure awaited any break of composure. If a Black student struck back at his assailant, that student would not only be arrested and probably beaten up, but the state would be sure to play up that incident in order to discredit the sit-in movement. Blacks had to rely on the justice of their cause, and they had to have faith that the powers-that-be — which were white — would eventually recognize justice was on their side. This was a strategy used again and again.

Certainly the young people were quicker than adults to decide on which side justice lay. By the end of 1960 about 70,000 people, most of them students, had participated in a sit-in, a march, or a rally. The young were particularly suited to take part — and give shape — to what was becoming the Movement. They had the courage to demand justice. More practically, students could afford to take part in activities which challenged people in power. They didn't have to

worry so much about an employer firing them. Nor did they have to worry about supporting families.

For many white students, participation in the growing Movement was a way to distance themselves from the values their parents stood for. Many may have felt disenchanted with the world of their parents. They may have seen the Movement as an alternative to taking their place in the system their parents supported. Their energies, they felt, were better spent in working for a better world than in working to sustain an old and unjust one.

That Easter weekend of 1960, students from Southern Black colleges came together to talk about how they could play a part in sustaining a movement for change. Experienced activist Ella Baker, in a speech entitled "More Than a Hamburger," spoke about how the students needed to do more than integrate the lunch counters. They needed to change the entire social structure. This task, Baker believed, was a task best left for young people. To the older members of the conference, she said: "The younger generation is challenging you and me. They are asking us to forget our laziness and doubt and fear and follow our dedication to the truth to the bitter end." [3]

It was at this conference that SNCC, or the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, was formed. It would become the dynamo which powered many of the Movement's campaigns for change.

The Birmingham Children's Crusade

When Project HIP-HOP visits Birmingham, a tour of the Civil Rights Institute and the exhibits in the adjacent Kelly Ingram Park makes it clear why Martin Luther King, Jr. had called Birmingham the most segregated city in America.

The city was a hotbed of racial discord. Between 1957 and 1963, 18 unsolved bombings in Black neighborhoods earned the city its nickname, "Bombingham." There was even an instance of a science textbook being banned for displaying a picture of black and white rabbits together. The most infamous of Birmingham's residents was its police chief, Eugene "Bull" Connor. He was called the "commissioner of public safety," though he had a long history of jeopardizing the safety of Black people.

Civil rights leaders planned a campaign to challenge segregation in Birmingham. The campaign, Project C, would select boycott targets and mobilize demonstrations. The "C" stood for "confrontation."

The first stage of Project C began with a round of sit-ins. "Bull" Connor quickly arrested the demonstrators. By the week's end, more than 150 had been arrested.

Connor resorted to a full arsenal of terror. In addition to nightsticks, he unleashed police dogs upon demonstrators, he used fire hoses with a currents so strong they could rip the bark off trees, and he lobbed tear gas grenades at the protesters. Dr. King had anticipated that Connor would crack down in this way. His hope was that the media, especially television, would report what was happening in Birmingham to the rest of the nation, and so stir the national conscience. It was "a victory" when cameras from around the world snapped photos of Connor loading Dr. King into a police van.

King used his time in prison to write his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, a reply to white ministers denouncing his Birmingham campaign as "unwise and untimely." He wrote, "For years I have heard the word 'Wait.' It rings in the ears of the Negro with a piercing familiarity. This 'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never'... justice too long delayed is justice denied."

Project C went into a new phase. A strategy was devised in which Black high school students and children would pour into the streets to protest segregation. The campaign would be dubbed "The Children's Crusade."

On May 2, 1963, 1,000 Black kids from six to eighteen marched out of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church into the Birmingham streets and Kelly Ingram Park. Reporters from around the world observed as, ironically, they were loaded into the school buses Bull Connor had brought in. By the day's end, 959 children had been jailed.

Project HIP-HOP Voices

Many young people in the Black community lack a sense of empathy for the people who have gone before them. They are denied a proper instruction of history, and fall prey to the dog-eat-dog, present-moment habits of American culture. It is hard for Black youth to feel the pain and suffering endured by their predecessors, those who were unafraid to make the necessary changes which lifted Blacks out of the oppression of Jim Crow.

I can understand what it is to not care for history. I didn't get a good history education, and I barely got any Black history. The Civil Rights struggle and its achievements were not real to me. Yet, as I think back on my HIP-HOP trip, I remember what made the pain and determination of the Black freedom fighters more real to me. People tend to feel similarly when they see pictures or Movement footage depicting how Blacks were openly abused. For me, it wasn't so much what was happening to the Black people, it was more how the people took the abuse, how they felt. I looked at the faces of the people and knew that here were no actors. These faces registered real emotion.

When looking at children's faces in a mural of the Children's Crusade, I saw how the artist captured a range of emotions. In some I saw anger, distress, frustration; and in other faces, determination, dedication, and hope. Looking at these faces made me a feel a mix of emotions. I felt angry, then determined, determined to do something to ensure that society will not tread backwards, will not profane the faces on the mural.

As I continue to study the Movement, what had been anger is now dedication. I am dedicated to struggling for true equality. I may not be a Malcolm X or Angela Davis, but there is a place for me as an activist in my daily life.

Project HIP-HOP Voices

Parts of the Mississippi Delta resembled the squatter camps we had seen in our visit to South Africa. Each house was little more than a one-room shack, shabbily put together, and always, it seemed, about to fall apart. Not too long before, we'd driven past large and luxurious tracts of farm land. At the corner of the field, where the neat rows of crops came to an end, stood the farmer's house. The difference is better described as between a "first" and "third world" country than between this area in Mississippi and that area, a few miles away.

Fannie Lou Hamer had grown up in the Delta. When Hamer was 44, she had tried to lead a group of Blacks to Ruleville to register to vote. Because of her attempt, she was jailed, beaten, and evicted from the farmland she and her family had worked on as sharecroppers for 18 years.

She then began working for SNCC. Hamer would get in front of a congregation of two or three hundred people. She would belt out the whip her voice was, leading the people in jubilee, and then she would sing, "Are we gonna fight for justice?" The congregation would loudly reply, "Amen!" "Y'know, Lord!" She would then sing, "Are we gonna march for justice?" Again, the people would reply, "Amen!" She would raise the cry again, more detailed this time, "Are we gonna march tomorrow at 7AM?" The people, caught up in her grace, would yell, "AMEN!" and then Hamer would say, "All right then. I expect to see each and every one of you tomorrow at 6:30AM sharp!" And the people, still reeling, would arrive the next morning and march.

While in the Delta, we made it a point to visit her grave site in Ruleville. It is well placed, in an open field, alongside the grave of "Pappy" Hamer, her husband. The inscription on her headstone reads, "I am sick and tired of being sick and tired."

The next day, police barricaded the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, where, inside, another 1,000 Black students had assembled. When the students tried to leave the church, Connor unleashed dogs upon them, and had the children blasted with high-pressure hoses which ripped off their clothing and left them bloodied. Across the nation, people watched their television screens in horror. The marches continued, swelling in size. By May 6, more than 2,000 demonstrators had been jailed. The cost of keeping them incarcerated placed a great strain on the police budget.

What finally brought the city to the bargaining table was the economic pressure the arrests and boycotts exerted. Birmingham merchants, alarmed at the drop in sales, agreed to desegregate their stores and lunch counter, and hire African-American workers. The city, for its part, released the demonstrators from jail and agreed to open a channel for discussing race relations.

The Klan, however, one of the city's unofficial authorities, pronounced the agreement void. Bombs went off, at the home of Dr. King's brother and at Dr. King's hotel, much as bombs had gone off in Montgomery when the bus boycott was victorious. In September 1963, on its annual youth day, a bomb tore apart the basement of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, killing four young girls. Later the same day, two Eagle Boy Scouts on their way home from a Klan rally shot at two Black children riding on a bicycle, killing one of them. Outrages like these served as a reminder that every victory only revealed how far there was yet to go.

The campaign for Voting Rights

Though gains had been made in the fight against segregation by 1963, achievements which were written into the Civil Rights Act of 1964, African Americans were still largely disenfranchised. It wasn't simply that African Americans didn't register to vote. It was more that they couldn't register to vote. Through a variety of means, their names were kept off the voting rolls. If they tried to register, they would find themselves the target of white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan.

Aware that African Americans had been making civil rights gains, Klansmen stepped up their pressure tactics, intent on keeping the vote in white hands. The Klan could easily—and openly—lynch Black people, or make sure they were harassed or deprived of their jobs. Who, after all, would punish Klansmen, especially when local law enforcement and the powerful Whites Citizens Councils were likely to be in sympathy with them?

If, finally, a Black person made it up to the state house, intent on registering to vote, other measures made sure he or she couldn't register. Literacy and other arbitrary tests were given, and generally given only to Black people. The tests would ask impossible questions like "How many bubbles are there in a bar of soap?" or "How many grains of sand are there on the local beach?"

Or those applying to register would be told they could not unless they had already paid a poll tax -- which they had been barred from paying before. There was also a "grandfather clause" added to the state constitution. Such a clause held that if your grandfather hadn't registered, then you couldn't register yourself. Of course, no African Americans would be allowed to register because their grandfathers had been slaves!

The Mississippi Summer Project

In 1964, in an effort to register more Black voters, COFO, or the Council of Federated Organizations (which included SNCC, CORE, the NAACP, and Dr. King's organization, SCLC), launched a voting rights summer project aimed at Mississippi. Mississippi had prided itself on its success, through intimidation and terror, in discouraging African-American voter registration.

COFO invited assistance from the North, believing that this would help focus national attention on what was happening in Mississippi. Hundreds of student volunteers from

all over the country flocked to join the 1964 Summer Project.

They saw it as an opportunity to play a role in the Movement. The plan was that they would move into Black neighborhoods and there encourage literacy training and registration.

Mississippi braced itself for what it regarded as an invasion. The mayor of Jackson enlarged the police force, bought hundreds of extra shotguns and a tank with a submachine gun mounted on its turret. Martial law was declared. "I may be killed and you may be killed," Jim Forman, the SNCC executive secretary told students at an orientation session. On June 20, 1964, the first crew of volunteers, 200 of them, went into Mississippi.

The next day, three young men, Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, and Michael Schwerner, were reported missing. After having investigated a burned church, the three had been detained in Philadelphia, Mississippi for "speeding." Later that night the sheriff released them into the hands of the KKK. All three were shot at close range in the head. The only African American in the group, James Chaney, from nearby Meridian, was beaten before being killed. Their bodies were buried in an earthen dam, their car was burned.

The day after their murder, the sheriff told reporters that their disappearance was probably a publicity stunt. Mississippi officials said that this was just another Northern hoax, aimed at stirring sympathy for the Movement.

The FBI conducted a half-hearted search. When they combed the rivers, they found, to their embarrassment, seven bodies of other Black men who had gone missing during the Movement. It wasn't until early August that the bodies of Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney were found after a Klan member gave the FBI a tip in exchange for a $30,000 reward.

When Project HIP-HOP goes to Meridian, Mississippi, we visit the grave of James Chaney. We learn that Chaney was not even permitted to be buried in a churchyard in his town, because it was said he brought so much bad publicity to Meridian by getting killed. A church, some distance away, agreed to accept his body.

The first year we went to visit his tomb, we found that a tiny picture of him embedded on the tombstone had been shot through. We were told that his picture had been used as target practice by the locals. The next year we visited, the entire tombstone had been pushed over. A flame that was supposed to be maintained was put out and a tree planted in his memory was destroyed. The cemetery itself was in shambles. In some of the grave sites, you could even see parts of a coffin where the earth had worn away.

Such disrespect, we discovered, was a symptom of a lingering problem. Even now, many still resent the Movement. Some display their racism in clear ways, as in vandalizing James Chaney's grave. Others, who continue to hold positions of power, can afford to be more covert in their racism. But they still manage, whether through economic or political means, to muffle Black voices.

Four of the killers of the three civil rights workers still live in Meridian and Philadelphia where they are, we were told, "respected" members of the community. One owns a nightclub, another is a security guard, another has been an elected justice of the peace, a fourth belongs to a prominent civic association.

Selma and the Voting Rights Act

Voter registration continued to move at a slow pace. State imposed barriers to registration effectively kept Blacks disenfranchised. Dr. King and other civil rights leaders realized that a campaign aimed at securing voting rights would have to first dismantle state barriers. In 1965 they settled on a strategy: nonviolent demonstrations in Selma.

Selma, Alabama, once a cotton center and slave market, had only 3% of its 29,000 black residents registered. Selma had a history of harassing civil rights workers and taking quick action to stamp out protests. Civil rights leaders calculated that if they could get the national media to report on

Project HIP-HOP Voices

Down South there is a tombstone which has endured endless attacks of vandalism since it was erected to the memory of James Chaney. Up until the moment when I saw the tombstone in Meridian, Mississippi, I was absorbing the trip with detached feelings.

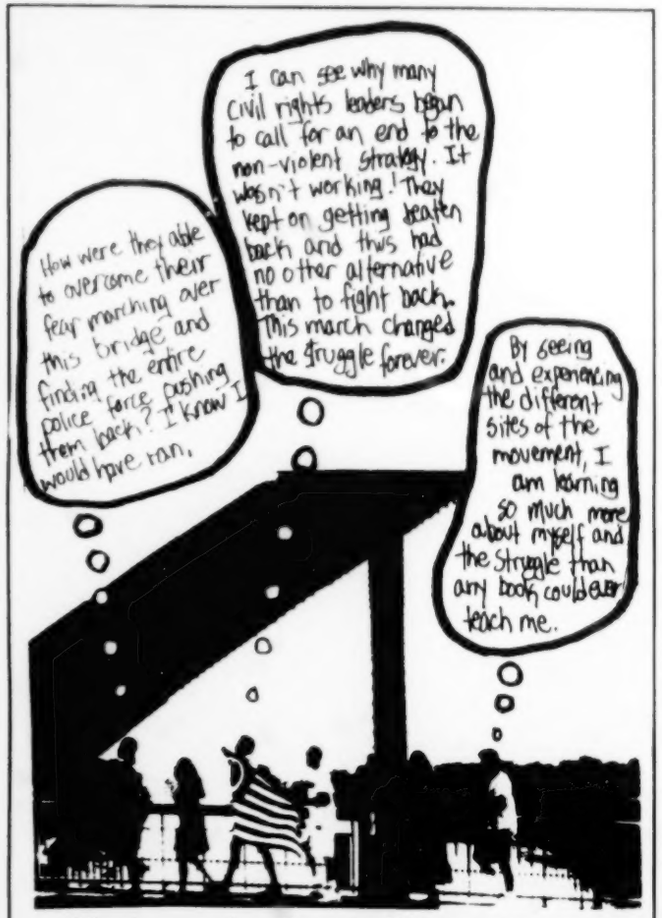
We arrived at the location of the isolated grave. As I took in the scene before me, a horrifying realization dawned on me. I did not want to believe that the prone tombstone had really been knocked over by opponents of human rights. We decided that the least we could do was try to stand it back up. Eight pairs of arms strained in vain to lift the marble stone.

Right now I can't understand why there is so much resistance and so much hatred, because that is what it takes to disrespect a dead man. When I realized just how deep this hate had to run, I understood why I was there.

The meaning of this trip is not only to educate, but also to create an understanding of responsibilities that we all have as human beings. This trip crystallized what I need to know.

Knowledge is indeed power, but it is not a power that should be monopolized by a few. I intend to educate those around me about the facts of yesterday and also about the feelings that all communities have to start re-discovering. Today, there is a common feeling of apathy that needs to be overcome. How many times have you felt like you as an individual have no strength to make changes? We have to learn not to give in to that sense of helplessness.

One important thing I learned on this trip was just how it made a difference when people came together regardless of age, wealth, color. I also know for certain that my personal journey of discovery has just begun.


How were they able to overcome their fear marching over this bridge and finding the entire police force pushing them back? I know I would have ran.
I can see why many Civil rights leaders began to call for an end to the non-violent strategy. It wasn't working! They kept on getting beaten back and thus had no other alternative than to fight back. This march changed the struggle forever.
By seeing and experiencing the different sites of the movement, I am learning so much more about myself and the struggle than any book could ever teach me.

Selma impressed me after seeing the Edmund Pettus Bridge and understanding how people got beaten just because they were walking peacefully across a bridge. Those people had an inner strength that people nowadays don't have and, truthfully, that people today need. Back then people of the community came together. If we reacted the way they did to things that were negative, we could think more clearly. Thinking would stop us from doing some stupid stuff that we are doing.

what was happening in Selma, the federal government would be forced to pay attention to the issue of voting rights.

This strategy worked. On February 1, 1965 Dr. King and a number of schoolchildren were arrested for marching. The news broadcast the images of kids being herded into police vans. As in Birmingham, the scenes stirred the national conscience. Two days after King's arrest, another, more militant leader, Malcolm X, arrived in Selma.

He told an interviewer, "I am 100 percent for any effort put forth by Black people in this country to have access to the ballot. And I frankly believe that since the ballot is our right, that we are within our rights to use whatever means is necessary to secure those rights....I believe that it is right to be nonviolent with people who are nonviolent. But when you're dealing with an enemy who doesn't know what nonviolence is, as far as I'm concerned, you're wasting your time." [4]

On February 18, a small civil rights march in Selma was attacked by law enforcement officers. Jimmie Lee Jackson, a 26-year old demonstrator, rushed to shield his mother from the blows of the police. As he did so, an officer put a gun to his belly and shot him . He died a week later.

"Who killed Jimmie Lee Jackson?" King asked, as he delivered Jackson's eulogy. In response, he said that Jackson was killed by every lawless sheriff, every racist politician from governor on down, every indifferent white minister, and every passive Black person who "stands on the sidelines in the struggle for justice."

King then announced a march from Selma to the Alabama state capital, Montgomery, a distance of 50 miles. The march was a protest against police brutality and the denial of voting rights. George Wallace, the Alabama governor, immediately declared that such a march would not take place. The planning proceeded anyway.

On Sunday, March 7, 1965, about 600 marchers left the Brown Chapel African Methodist Church. When they reached the Edmund Pettus bridge at the edge of the town, the marchers saw, at the other end, a horde of armed officers wearing gas masks. News people lined the bridge awaiting the confrontation between the long column of marchers and the police.

The sheriff, Jim Clark, gave the command to attack. The horsemen charged and the gas grenades were tossed. Police set upon the marchers with chains and billy clubs and cattle prods. Even bystanders were attacked. John Lewis of SNCC had his skull fractured, 16 marchers ended up hospitalized, another 50 received emergency treatment. The savagery of the "Bloody Sunday" was filmed and broadcast into homes as a special report. The national conscience was outraged.

Scores of people who had witnessed the brutality on their TVs descended upon Selma. King announced another march, which set out on March 9. Again, when the marchers reached the Edmund Pettus Bridge, they were met with armed officers. The marchers fell on their knees and began to pray. Rather than risk more violence, King turned around and returned to the church, to the dismay of some SNCC leaders.

In Selma that evening three ministers were attacked as they left a restaurant. One, James Reeb, a welfare worker in Boston's slums, died two days later from injuries. A national outcry again went up. The nation had, in the past few weeks, witnessed a level of violence that had challenged their idea of what kind of country America was. Demonstrations all over the country ensued. Taking the cue, President Johnson announced a Voting Rights bill.

"Their cause must be our cause too," Johnson said in a televised address to the nation, "It is not just Negroes, but all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice," and in conclusion he proclaimed, "We shall overcome!" [5]

The Selma-to-Montgomery march was to take place again, a third time. A federal judge had allowed the march to take place, but Governor Wallace had still refused to provide police protection. Johnson thus federalized nearly 2,000 of the Alabama National Guard. He also dispatched army troops, the FBI, and another 100 federal marshals, all to

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ensure that, finally, this march would be successful.

More than three thousand people, Black and white, began again at Brown's Chapel. This time on the fourth day, they arrived in Montgomery. Before the state capitol building just down the road from his Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Dr. King, triumphant, addressed the nation, "I know some of you are asking today, 'How long will it take?' I come to say to you this afternoon, however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long...because the arm of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice." [6]

That very evening Klansmen, in whose car sat an FBI informer, shot and killed a white woman from Detroit, Viola Liuzzo, who was transporting marchers from Montgomery back to Selma. Her death gave the Voting Rights Act the impetus it needed to be passed by Congress. In Selma the National Voting Rights Museum bears eloquent witness to the role which the town played in its passage.

The Voting Rights Act meant that the door to democracy was opened wider for Black Americans. Blacks were elected to public offices. The grip segregationists exerted over state politics loosened as the power of the Black vote was felt. The federal government appointed Blacks to positions of power. Thurgood Marshall, who later went on to become the first Black justice on the Supreme Court, was selected as Johnson's solicitor general.

Despite the gains, however, disturbing signs persist. When Project HIP-HOP went to Selma, we learned that Mayor Joseph Smitherman, who had called Dr. King "Martin Luther Coon" in 1965, remains in office today. The people who killed Jimmie Lee Jackson and James Reeb have never been convicted for their crimes.

We are reminded again and again of the fact that every gain has had its human cost. The strategy of nonviolence, though it had been put to effective use, had proved very costly. By 1965 many activists were beginning to pay heed to Malcom X's call for self-defense, and were prepared to turn away from nonviolent direct action.

Footnotes

1. Fred Powledge, *We Shall Overcome: Heroes of the Civil Rights Movement*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993, p. 178.

2. Clayborne Carson, et. al, editors, *Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990*, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 155.

3. Sanford Wexler, *The Civil Rights Movement: An Eyewitness History*, Facts on File, p. 112.

4. *Malcolm X: February 1965, The Final Speeches*, Pathfinder Press, 1992, pp. 24-25.

5. Sanford Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

6. James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, HarperCollins, 1991, p. 230.

Definitions

Apartheid -- the sytem of racial separation in South Africa finally came to an end with Nelson Mandela's election in 1994. Segregation in the South was like "petty apartheid" in South Africa (keeping the races apart in schools, public accommodations, housing, jobs, etc.) Apartheid had features that the US system lacked: such as the requirement that Black people carry passes to move from place to place, and bantustans or a form of reservations for Black people from different "tribes" or ethnic groups.

Bill of Rights -- the first ten amendments to the US Constitution, adopted in December 1791, to guarantee such individual liberties as the free exercise of religion, freedom of speech, the press and assembly, freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, the right to a jury trial and due process of the law. The Fourteenth Amendment extends these rights to all people, and protects them from unconstitutional actions by state and local governments as well as the federal government.

Boycott -- refusing to use or buy something as a form of protest.

Civil rights -- your rights to be treated equally before the law, and to be free of most forms of public and private discrimination in employment, housing, accommodations, education, and voting. **Civil liberties** are the individual freedoms guaranteed to you by the federal Bill of Rights and the Massachusetts Constitution.

Grandfather clause -- Black people were disenfranchised by this rule, which said you could only register to vote if your grandfather had registered. **Disenfranchised** means being deprived of the vote.

Movement Voices

"There are very few human beings in this world who would not use violence to protect themselves. We live, after all, in a violent world. Violence in this world is always made manifest in a number of different ways. To purposely keep people hungry and in poverty — that's violence. So violence isn't always about the knife, the gun, and the sword. You have to recognize the other forms of violence that oppress people. I wasn't nonviolent. A lot of us adopted nonviolence as a tactic only, even in the SCLC, Dr. King's organization. Nonviolence will work sometimes, but not all the time. Angola, for instance, did not get free through the use of nonviolence."

Owen Brooks to Project HIP-HOP, July 13, 1995.

Do you agree with Owen Brooks about the various forms violence can take other than "the knife, the gun and the sword"? If you do agree, give some examples.

Do you think you would have had the self-discipline to participate in the sit-in movement? How do you think you would have felt sitting at a lunch counter while other people harassed you? What sort of training would you need for this kind of nonviolent direct action?

Brainstorm a list of situations today in which this kind of protest might work. When would it be ineffective?

Project HIP-HOP Voices: Nonviolence in the Movement

It was in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, that Mahatma Gandhi was first tossed out of the "whites only" carriage of a train early this century. He had read *Civil Disobedience* by our own Henry David Thoreau, and used some of its ideas to develop his strategy of nonviolent resistance. Later, he returned to India and used that strategy to get the British tossed out of his country.

Now, in our own country's struggle with segregation, Martin Luther King, Jr., himself an expert on being kicked out of places, was known to be an admirer of Gandhi. He was impressed by the way Gandhi used the nonviolent resistance to frustrate and eventually expel the British colonizers.

In the early years of the Movement, nearly every campaign used the strategy of nonviolent resistance or direct action: the bus boycotts, the sit-ins, the freedom rides, the Children's Crusade. The hazards were apparent: the strategy would stir frustration, as it was intended to, and in the frustration people would strike out. It was exactly here, in the violent reaction to a nonviolent protest, that the strategy would be effective. Nonviolence was aimed at the conscience of the nation. It hoped to make clear that justice was on the side of the protesters, as it hoped to make absurd the system their attackers defended.

The strategy relied heavily on the media. Nonviolence depended on the media to deliver the spectacle of one-sided violence across the nation. It probably wouldn't have succeeded so well before the age of television. Without the spread of such images, the sacrifice of the nonviolent might as well have been in vain. The apartheid state realized this in South Africa, and kept television out of the country altogether until very late.

In the United States, when people saw how horribly treated African Americans were, they began to sympathize with the Movement — or maybe they just were embarrassed at how our country looked to the rest of the world. Sympathy meant that marches and rallies would swell in size as more people would join them, petitions would be written to state and federal officials demanding what the hell was going on with "the Negro situation," and donations would flow into organizations like the NAACP and SNCC. Politicians would be induced to react because their constituents would be concerned about the issue. President Lyndon Johnson, for instance, introduced the Voting Rights Act only after the national broadcast of the Selma marchers being beaten.

In many ways, nonviolent resistance was also a *safer* strategy. Can you imagine what would happen if every person sitting-in at the lunch counter swung back at every person who squirted some ketchup on him or her? A fight would break out, and it would hardly be even. First off, one must remember that these campaigns are taking place in the South, and thus there would be more white people pissed off at these "trouble-makers." It would not be unusual for five or six whites to beat on one Black person. And if that Black person had hit a white, the beating he received would certainly be serious, if not deadly. And what if the police arrive on the scene. They see whites hitting Blacks, and Blacks, albeit in self-defense, hitting back. Who do you think they'd turn their clubs on then?

Some people, like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., believed in nonviolence as a *moral* strategy. He believed that "there is more power in socially organized masses on the march than there is in guns in the hands of a few desperate men." Others followed it because the alternative — violence — seemed so unthinkable and so unwinnable, given the arms and willingness to use them on the other side.

Many people, however, who took part in the nonviolent direct action of the 50s and 60s, kept their guns at home. They wanted to make sure they had some form of self-defense if the Klan came calling. King himself had pointed out that "the principle of self-defense, even involving weapons and bloodshed, has never been condemned, even by Gandhi." ("The Social Organization of Non-Violence," October 1959).

UNIT FIVE: Beyond the Civil Rights Phase of the Movement

What was the Movement? What did it achieve? Was it a success or a failure?

You might think these questions are easy to answer. The Movement is usually described as a struggle for "civil rights" — that is, for everyone, regardless of race, to be treated equally before the law.

Seen in these narrow legal terms, the Movement was a success. During the decade of 1955 - 65, mass action forced the US government to resume the forward march signposted by Reconstruction a century before. Movement milestones are the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which barred segregation "on the ground of race, color, religion, or national origin," and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The "whites only" signs came down, and the numbers of African Americans registered to vote went up. In 1954 fewer than a quarter of all adult African Americans were enfranchised. By the end of the 60s, as the impact of the Voting Rights Act was felt, over three quarters had registered to vote.

The Movement is not over

As Project HIP-HOP discovered on our journeys South, some veterans of the Movement do not see the struggle they participated in as confined to a single decade and to the single objective of attaining legal rights. Instead, they see it as a continuing, long-term effort to achieve *actual* (not just legal) equality and make America live up to its democratic promise.

"The conventional term *civil rights movement*," writes Movement veteran and historian Vincent Harding, "is too narrow a description for the great, Black-led eruption that shook the anti-democratic, white-supremacist foundations of this nation not long ago.... At its deepest and best levels, what we so often call the civil rights movement was in fact a powerful outcropping of the continuing struggle for the expansion of democracy in the United States...."[1]

Seen in these terms, the Movement was a powerful catalyst for the expansion of rights not just for racial minorities, but for women, the disabled, gays and lesbians, immigrants, the elderly, and other social groups. But as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. realized, shaking the foundations of white supremacy is not the same thing as taking those foundations apart, brick by brick, and building anew. It wasn't enough just to take down the "whites only" signs. It wasn't enough just to "dream" about an integrated, color-blind society. The social and economic structures which had been built on racism had to be completely reconstructed. What good was it, Dr. King said, to be able to sit at a lunch counter if you can't afford the price of a hamburger?[2]

The Black Power phase of struggle

The Movement of the period 1955 - 1965 is identified with Dr. King's strategy of nonviolent direct action. But no sooner had President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law, than an era was born which shared Malcolm X's impatience with the slow pace of change and the violence aimed at Black people. The August 1965 uprising in the Watts area of Los Angeles, sparked by a confrontation between African-American youths and white police, was a sign of things to come.

Meanwhile, the concept of "Black Power," a phrase used by Richard Wright as the title for a book, and by the activist, singer, and actor Paul Robeson in the 1950s, was being discussed in SNCC offices. It would first capture national media attention at a Mississippi rally in June 1966.

SNCC tried to use the new Voting Rights Act to bring democracy and Black political power to Lowndes County, Alabama, through which the Selma-Montgomery march had passed. Over 80 percent of the County's population was Black, and not a single Black person had been registered to vote before the Voting Rights Act. SNCC activists set up an

Movement Voices

"The Movement failed in many areas. There were a lot of circumstances that made it happen that way — the federal government's repression of organizations, its riding herd on certain kinds of leaders, and so on. Philosophically, we were not together in terms of the goals. Some idealistic people hoped that the Movement would be the vanguard, the vehicle for basic change in America, such as the redistribution of wealth, the redistribution of land. We also wanted a different kind of political system — one that was more democratic and humane. None of this happened.

"Let's look, for instance, at the availability of health care. This should have been a byproduct of the struggle we went through. As long as I've been politically active, we have advocated national health care in this country.

"We failed in crucial areas. You must evaluate what I am telling you, and form for yourself a vision of what you think America needs to look like. And if you construct a vision of what some people like myself have said, you will find that we have one helluva long way to go. You should read more history, and put it in the context of what you may visualize as a better situation which we need to strive for. I want you to look for yourself, and see if there is any truth in what I say.

"You have to work for change where you are. To do that, you have to understand what you're up against, how the system works, and where you want to be 20 years from now."

Owen Brooks to Project HIP-HOP, July 13, 1995.

What does your vision for the country look like? How can you bring it about? Can it be done in your lifetime?

Movement Voices

"It is time we stopped our blithe lip service to the guarantees of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. These fine sentiments are embodied in the Declaration of Independence, but that document was always a declaration of intent rather than of reality. There were slaves when it was written... and to this day, black Americans have not life, liberty nor the privilege of pursuing happiness, and millions of poor white Americans are in economic bondage that is scarcely less oppressive... America has not yet changed because so many think it need not change, but this is the illusion of the damned. America must change because twenty-three million black citizens will no longer live supinely in a wretched past. They have left the valley of despair; they have found strength in struggle; and whether they live or die, they shall never crawl nor retreat again. Joined by white allies, they will shake the prison walls until they fall. America must change."

Martin Luther King, Jr., "A Testament of Hope" (1968)

"We want to say that first, it is clear to me that we have to wage a psychological battle on the right for black people to defend their own terms, define themselves as they see fit and organize themselves as they see fit...We are on the move for our liberation. We have been tired of trying to prove things to white people. We are tired of trying to explain to white people that we're not going to hurt them.... The question is, will white people overcome their racism and allow for that to happen in this country? If that does not happen, brothers and sisters, we have no choice, but to say very clearly, move on over, or we're going to move on over you."

Stokely Carmichael at University of California at Berkeley, November 19, 1966

independent party, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, using a Black Panther as its symbol. All seven of their candidates for local offices were defeated. Open intimidation and threats of economic reprisals by the several dozen prominent families who owned 90 percent of the land showed that it would take more than the Voting Rights Act to bring about substantial change. The Black Panther symbol would soon be adopted by the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California, which was officially launched in October, 1966.

SNCC veteran James Forman, who briefly was a member of the Black Panther Party, described the transformation of the Movement in these terms:

"Voting discrimination and segregation of public facilities had generally disappeared in the South after years of protest — that protest which produced the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. At the same time, the newly established political rights of black people in the South were being undermined by whites in many ways: deliberate miscounting of votes, bribery, economic intimidation of voters. The South was becoming more and more like the North. The fundamentals of racism — inadequate housing, lack of jobs, insufficient medical attention, inferior education — remained basically unchanged throughout black communities, whether in New York or Mississippi. Thus the call for Black Power drew substance from the realities of the lives of black people across the nation. With the equalizing of our problems in North and South, the concept evoked a national response. It had emerged from the Southern experience, but had meaning for black people everywhere." [3]

"Black Power" meant a new emphasis on self-defense, racial pride, and grassroots organizing for Black cultural and economic advancement. According to some activists we met, it took the struggle to a higher level and ensured some concrete gains for Black people.

"The Black Power Movement," Dr. Claude Barnes told Project HIP-HOP, "is part of the Movement, although it is not written about as such. Many scholars want to separate the two phases of the Movement. The civil rights phase accepted the cultural assumptions of the wider country and didn't look at identity. It believed that if you just extend Constitutional rights to everyone, then everything will be all right." [4] The Black Power Movement, on the other hand, "raised questions of systematic oppression and exploitation," and the need for "major change and social transformation." Barnes was a leader of a student revolt at his Greensboro, North Carolina high school and the first student to enroll in Malcolm X Liberation University, which moved to Greensboro in 1970. He now teaches at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University, whose students began the sit-in movement in 1960.

Dr. Barnes described the organizations formed in the late 1960s and early 70s to fight attempts to shut Black colleges and schools (seen as the base of student protest) and to work for economic justice. Grassroots activism led to important changes, especially in the economic sphere, where more jobs were opened up to African Americans. Although there is still, Dr. Barnes told us, "intense segregation" in Greensboro's neighborhoods, graveyards, and institutions, things are definitely better than they were before.

The cities burn

Back in the summer of 1967, as calls for "Black Power" came to national attention, desperate conditions in urban ghettos and incidents of police brutality ignited uprisings in 150 cities, mostly in the North. Ninety people were killed, 40,000 injured, and the damage to property immense. The rebellion in the single city of Detroit lasted five days, causing 43 deaths.

Horrified by the violence, Dr. King was determined to demonstrate that nonviolent methods could be used effectively in the fight for political power and economic justice. In the last year of his life, he told the US Senate that "the great challenge facing the civil rights movement is to organize and gain identity with ghetto dwellers." America as a nation has

never yet, he declared, "committed itself to solving the problems of its Negro citizens" — and now time was running out. [5]

To focus the nation's attention on economic inequality, Dr. King planned to mobilize African Americans, poor whites, Hispanics, and Native Americans in a "Poor People's Campaign." He wanted to bring them to Washington DC, where they would live in shanties and take part in demonstrations demanding that the government confront the problems of poverty in the nation's cities and rural areas.

Meanwhile, King angered those in power by condemning the Vietnam War. Instead of using resources to fight poverty at home, he declared, the US had built a military machine to kill millions of Vietnamese in a futile and unjust war. "It became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population.... So we have repeatedly been faced with the cruel irony of watching negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit." [6]

In language reminiscent of Malcolm X, Dr. King praised "the black revolution" for "forcing America to face all its interrelated flaws — racism, poverty, militarism and materialism.... It reveals systemic rather than superficial flaws and suggests that radical reconstruction of society itself is the real issue to be faced." [7]

The struggle for economic equality took Dr. King to Memphis, Tennessee in April 1968. He intended to lead a march of striking sanitation workers who were demanding union recognition and decent wages. On April 4th he died on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, killed by a sniper's bullet.

In the wake of his death, more than a hundred cities went up in flames. The nation's television screens were dominated by images of the National Guard and army in full battle gear patrolling our own burning streets, while other US soldiers burned villages in Vietnam.

The Kerner Commission

A month before Dr. King's assassination, a document of unusual honesty and insight was published by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, appointed by President Lyndon Johnson and chaired by Otto Kerner. The Commission, two of whose members were African American, wrote about the anger boiling over in so many cities:

"Segregation and poverty have created in the racial ghetto a destructive environment totally unknown to most white Americans. What white Americans have never fully understood — but what the Negro can never forget — is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it." [8]

The Kerner Commission examined the role played by white racism throughout our nation's history. It traced the Movement's attempts to bring about change, and the despair that made African Americans embrace more militant demands for Black Power when they "could see progress toward equality accompanied by bitter resistance. Perhaps most of all, they could feel the persistent, pervasive racism that kept them in inferior segregated schools, restricted them to ghettos, barred them from fair employment, provided double standards in courts of justice, inflicted bodily harm on their children, and blighted their lives with a sense of hopelessness and despair." [9]

The report, written when 11.9 percent of the nation's whites and 40.6 percent of African Americans and other racial minorities were living below the poverty level, made several urgent recommendations to President Johnson's government. These included the need to integrate schools, improve housing, open up the existing job structure, create

Activity

Black Panther Party Manifesto of 1966 (extracts)

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
2. We want full employment for our people.
3. We want an end to the robbery by the CAPITALIST of our Black Community.
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.
5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.
6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service.
7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.
8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.
9. We want all black people brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the constitution of the United States.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.

Which of these demands do you think alarmed the authorities the most? Do you think that this Manifesto would find many supporters today?

COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS
RACIAL INTELLIGENCE 3/4/68

GOALS

1. Prevent the coalition of militant black nationalist groups. In unity there is strength; a truism that is no less valid for all its triteness. An effective coalition of black nationalist groups might be the first step toward a real "Mau Mau" in America, the beginning of a true black revolution.

2. Prevent the rise of a "messiah" who could unify, and electrify, the militant black nationalist movement. Malcolm X might have been such a "messiah;" he is the martyr of the movement today. Martin Luther King, Stokely Carmichael and Elijah Muhammed all aspire to this position. Elijah Muhammed is less of a threat because of his age. King could be a very real contender for this position should he abandon his supposed "obedience" to "white, liberal doctrines" (nonviolence) and embrace black nationalism. Carmichael has the necessary charisma to be a real threat in this way.

3. Prevent violence on the part of black nationalist groups. This is of primary importance, and is, of course, a goal of our investigative activity; it should also be a goal of the Counterintelligence Program. Through counterintelligence it should be possible to pinpoint potential troublemakers and neutralize them before they exercise their potential for violence.

4. Prevent militant black nationalist groups and leaders from gaining respectability.

5. A final goal should be to prevent the long-range growth of militant black nationalist organizations, especially among youth.

TARGETS

Primary targets of the Counterintelligence Program, Black Nationalist-Hate Groups, should be the most violent and radical groups and their leaders. We should emphasize those leaders and organizations that are nationwide in scope and are most capable of disrupting this country. These targets should include the radical and violence-prone leaders, members, and followers of the:

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)
Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)
Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM)
Nation of Islam (NOI)

Offices handling these cases and those of Stokely Carmichael of SNCC, H. Rap Brown of SNCC, Martin Luther King of SCLC, Maxwell Stanford of RAM, and Elijah Muhammed of NOI, should be alert for counterintelligence suggestions. ...

two million new jobs for the inner cities, provide new federal funds for welfare, set up civilian review boards to oversee the police, and recruit more African Americans into the police force and the media. "Our nation," the Commission warned, "is moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal."

It could be argued, of course, that this was nothing new. There had always been two societies in the nation. What the Kerner Commission succeeded in highlighting was how relatively little had changed in the country since the "white's only" signs came down. The Movement had clearly not yet gone far enough.

The FBI strikes back

But the head of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, was determined that it go no further. By 1967 his organization had declared war on Black militancy. The FBI's Counter- Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) had been created in 1956 to "neutralize" (that is, "to cause to cease to exist as a political force") individuals and domestic groups which were seen as a threat to national security.[10] It used psychological warfare, infiltration, harassment through the legal system, violence, and even assassination against its targets. It was publicly exposed after the theft of COINTELPRO files in 1971. Eventually, the FBI was forced to make public information about its programs aimed at destroying the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party, groups working for Puerto Rican independence, Chicano activists, the American Indian Movement, and a range of anti-war, feminist, gay, and student groups.

High on the FBI's list of targeted organizations were what they termed "Black Nationalist Hate Groups." A memo from J. Edgar Hoover to "all offices" orders agents to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters....under no circumstances should the existence of the program be made known outside the Bureau [FBI]...." (FBI Memo of August 25, 1967 from Hoover to "All Offices.") COINTELPRO sought to create splits in organizations, and to divide groups along racial and ethnic lines and turn them against each other. It was particularly brutal in its treatment of the Black Panthers. In Chicago, the FBI sent forged letters to street gangs which turned them against the Black Panthers. On December 4, 1969 it helped the Chicago police assassinate Black Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark as they lay asleep in their beds.

"Moderate" Black leaders did not escape FBI scrutiny. Martin Luther King, Jr. was wiretapped. Shortly before he was scheduled to receive the Nobel Peace Price, the FBI used tapes from his bedroom to encourage him to commit suicide. The FBI kept files on SNCC leaders, Fannie Lou Hamer and other Movement activists. Cleveland Sellers, who had been program director of SNCC when he was 20 years old, was accused of participating in "a riot" in Orangeburg, South Carolina in 1968 and served a year in jail. Sellers had been shot in the "riot" — also known as the Orangeburg Massacre — which was the culmination of 13 years of student protest in the town. Following a demonstration by students outside a bowling alley which refused to integrate, the South Carolina Highway Patrolmen, South Carolina National Guardsmen, and local police surrounded the campus of South Carolina State College, a predominantly Black college in Orangeburg. They then fired without warning at nearly 400 students who were gathered on the campus. Three students, Henry Smith, Samuel Hammond, and Delano Middleton, were killed. Twenty-eight others were wounded. The injured, many of whom were shot in the back, were initially refused treatment at the county hospital where they were taken for treatment.

Cleveland Sellers told Project HIP-HOP that he was deliberately targeted for arrest because of his political activities. "Wherever I would have gone, I would have run into the same kind of response. What happened in Orangeburg happened to some degree all over where there was a

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Movement and people were placing their lives on the line for social change." [11] No police were ever charged with the deaths of the students. In 1993 Sellers was issued a pardon by the State of South Carolina.

Earlier in the 60s, the FBI had run background checks on civil rights demonstrators to see if they had Communist connections, and had refused to extend them protection. Typical of the FBI's response to the violence perpetuated by the Klan was its half-hearted investigation of the 1963 bombing of Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, which killed four Sunday School girls. The investigation into the bombing was finally reopened in July 1997.

The war on Black elected officials

After COINTELPRO was publicly exposed, it was, the FBI claimed, shut down. But its methods — and its racism — lived on. There is evidence, for instance, that the FBI was involved in trying to overturn Black majorities in the election of county commissioners and school board members in Alabama in 1984. Its campaign to discredit Black elected officials was, according to Rep. Dymally, called the "Fruhmenschen" (German for primitive man) program. [12]

Take the case of Eddie Carthan, elected the first Black mayor of Tchula (population 2000) in the Mississippi Delta in 1977, at the age of 27. As a 12 year old, Carthan had gone to jail for 3 days for taking part in Movement demonstrations. He served as Tchula's mayor for over three years, during which time he paved streets in the Black community, built new houses, and brought transport to the elderly and disabled. Tchula became an example to other Delta towns, and a challenge to the status quo.

During his time as mayor, the soft-spoken Eddie Carthan told Project HIP-HOP on July 17, 1997, the "powers that be did everything except shoot me to get me out of office." An FBI agent came to Tchula shortly after he was elected mayor to prepare for his political assassination. The media helped isolate him from the community.

The Governor put Tchula under martial law and sent in carloads of state troopers. The state legislature passed a law allowing the board of alderman to run the town instead of the mayor. There were daily threats on his life. His house was shot at, and he had to have a 24-hour guard. Finally, he was accused of "simple assault" on a police officer and sentenced to three years in prison (no one else in the history of the State of Mississippi has been given a prison sentence for "simple assault"). His case was taken up by Amnesty International. He spent 18 months in prison, much of it in solitary confinement and locked down with death row prisoners.

Eddie Carthan told us that he still has a hard time earning a living, and thinks he is still under surveillance. He also believes that if the community had given him more support, he would not have been jailed. But, he says, there is still a "deep embedded fear that people have to deal with. There used to be a fear of survival, of physical harm. Today it is a mental, emotional fear — a fear of the future, a helpless feeling."

Definitions

Amnesty International — an international organization, whose headquarters is in London, which works to free "prisoners of conscience" around the world and to end torture and the death penalty.

FBI — originally called the Bureau of Investigation, it was set up as part of the US Department of Justice in 1908. It added "Federal" to its name during Franklin Roosevelt's presidency. As early as 1917, it targeted the Black community for surveillance, looking for evidence of subversive activities. It was headed by J. Edgar Hoover from 1924 to 1972. Anyone interested in racial justice was considered a "Red" or "Communist" by Hoover.

Footnotes

1. Vincent Harding, *Hope and History: Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement*, Orbis Books, 1991, p. 1.

2. Dennis Cashman, *African Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1900-1990*, NYU Press, 1991, p. 210.

3. James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, OpenHand Publishing Co., 1985, p. 457.

4. July 10, 1997 meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina. Claude Barnes' student activities are described in Thomas Dent, *Southern Journey: A Return to the Civil Rights Movement*, William Morrow and Company, 1997, p. 53.

5. D. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, Vintage Books, 1986, p. 609.

6. "A Time to Break the Silence," April 1967, *Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, p. 233.

7. "A Testament of Hope," in *A Testament of Hope, The Essential Writings*, p. 315.

8. *The Riot Report: A Shortened Version of the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, Viking Press, 1969, p. 20.

9. *Op cit.*, p. 130.

10. Richard Criley, *The FBI and the First Amendment*, First Amendment Foundation, 1990, p. 29.

11. Meeting of July 10, 1997. We also met the owner of the All Star Bowling Alley who had refused to integrate his facilities in 1968. He did not regret his earlier actions.

12. Mary Sawyer, *Harassment of Black Elected Officials: Ten Years Later*, Voter Education and Registration, Inc., 1987; Speech by Rep. Mervyn Dymally (CA) in *Congressional Record* of January 27, 1988, p. H31.

Voices Heard at School

Black people in my school always sit together during lunch time, and they don't really talk to any of the white people. The Asians have their own lunch table too, but at least I can talk with some of them. I think we should all have assigned seats so that white people will get to know some Black people. If we don't have a dialogue on race, how will we ever understand this problem?

I know that Black people have been oppressed in this society, but let's face it, they can pretty much do what they want today. Look at Bill Cosby or Michael Jordan. C'mon now, affirmative action is simply reverse racism against white people. I mean, there are poor white people too! Why are they forgotten?

I don't think a Black man can make it in this society. The truth is this is a society founded upon one premise: white supremacy. Look around you. The police bust his head open. Schools treat him as inferior. The media paint him as a criminal. What's left? Prison?

Let me be honest: I really don't trust Black people. I don't like the music they listen to. I don't like the clothes they wear. And I don't like the way they speak. I mean, c'mon, how hard is it to speak proper English! Look, they're killing themselves off anyway! For what? For sneakers and stupid things like that! I'm not saying all Black people are like this. A few know what they're doing. But those people need to get their act together.

Black people have certainly been discriminated against. But it happened a long time ago. Why should I be held responsible for what other people did? I think we should make sure we don't discriminate the other way either. It's easy to be racist towards white people too.

Do you agree with any of these voices?

UNIT SIX: The Movement's Unfinished Business

"The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line."
W.E.B. DuBois (1903)

Today, racism is far more camouflaged than it was earlier in the century. It is buried in institutional practices. It is hidden in coded language and subtle messages some people get when they shop, or look for a place to live or for a taxi, or have dealings with the police. Today, well-funded pressure groups and opinion-makers insist that "racism is over" and that even in its heyday, it wasn't so bad. They are rewriting history to reflect their views. Jim Crow segregation, one of their leading writers recently stated, was "in part" an effort of the Southern ruling elite "to protect blacks."[1]

As Project HIP-HOP discovered when we visited the "Red Neck Shop" in Laurens, South Carolina, even the Klan has adopted a new pose and new marketing technique suited to these times when openly racist language is no longer acceptable. We don't hate Blacks, their message goes. We just love whites. They imply that their use of violence to achieve their ends is a thing of the past.

Despite plentiful evidence suggesting otherwise, the government has refused to see a pattern of Klan or other hate group involvement in the burning of more than two hundred Black churches in the South since 1990. In Ruleville, Mississippi, the hometown of Movement activist Fannie Lou Hamer, New Mount Zion Church has been burned twice and shot at from a nearby bridge, which has been defaced with Ku Klux Klan slogans. Arson attacks on Black churches, the base of Movement organizing and community action, still occur on a more or less monthly basis.[2]

A growing diversity

The nation looks different as well. Immigrants from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Central and Latin America and the Caribbean, have made the "minority" population increasingly diverse. The 1990 Census revealed that 20 million residents in the US had been born in a different country, a higher number that at any point in our history.

Their presence has given the country an extraordinary linguistic and cultural wealth. But it has also stimulated anti-immigrant fears and outright xenophobia. Many Americans of European descent fear being overwhelmed by immigrants who do not look or sound like them. Some members of native-born minority groups fear they will lose jobs to the newcomers, who are seen as a source of cheap labor.

W.E.B. DuBois' "color line" has been blurred by the increasingly varied population, but it has not been dissolved. The racial hierarchy, with "white" on top, has not been overturned. Racial stereotypes about "nonwhite" groups abound, and drive anti-immigrant legislation. The politics of divide and rule set one group against another, and encourage them to fight for the ever smaller pieces of the American pie reserved for people who are neither white nor well off.

Learning from the lessons of history

For the first half of this century, the United States tolerated the Jim Crow system. Racism was made all too visible by "whites only" signs and by voting booths where only white people could cast their ballots. Over the next 20 years, it seemed that we might finally be prepared to deal with 350 years of racial oppression. The legal underpinnings of white supremacy were abolished. But before power relationships and institutional structures could be remade, the momentum was stopped, and the achievements of the Movement began to be rolled back.

In order to understand where we are now and how we

can start moving forward again, we must take stock of the Movement's gains and losses. As we do so, we should ask ourselves: are we really prepared to see the clock again turned back as it was a century ago, when the gains of Reconstruction were undermined? If so, the problem of the twenty-first century, when "minorities" become the majority population, will still be the problem color line.

Opening the door to economic opportunity

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was supposed to end employment discrimination on the basis of race, sex, or nationality. But it is one thing to pass a law, and another thing to make it work.

For years after 1964 there was little sign of change, since there were so many subtle ways, short of open bigotry, to exclude African Americans altogether, or keep them in low status positions. For instance, they could be told that they didn't have enough seniority to be promoted. Or they were not hired because they had not scored high enough on certain exams. These exams were often as unrelated to job performance as the Jim Crow tests for voter registration were unrelated to good citizenship.

Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon had issued executive orders requiring federal employers to increase the numbers of African Americans in the workplace. What became known as affirmative action — opening up jobs and institutions that had long been closed to minorities and women — was never a coherent government policy. At first it was a timid and piecemeal attempt to change recruitment in public employment. It was gradually extended to include women and other racial minorities, and adopted on a voluntary basis by large private employers and universities.

Affirmative action was never about "special privileges," and rarely imposed numerical "quotas." Instead, it was an attempt to deal with a history and institutions which had systematically dehumanized African Americans and other minority groups, and excluded them (as well as women of all races) from desirable opportunities. It was intended to remedy past and present discrimination, and to make jobs available to qualified people regardless of race or gender. Affirmative action policies urged employers to make a "good faith" effort to bring women and members of minority groups into workplaces that were previously all male and all white. This could be done by broadening the applicant pool beyond the "old boy" network, and by judging applicants on their ability to do the job, rather than on their educational credentials or on test scores which had nothing to do with a particular line of work. Only occasionally were timetables and numerical goals for hiring and "set asides" for minority businesses included in affirmative action programs.

After 20 years of affirmative action, the number of African-American police officers had tripled, the number of African-American firemen had gone up fivefold, and there were significant gains in other professions and university enrollment. White women reaped even more substantial gains.

But we must look at the overall picture to put these results in perspective. White males account for only a third of the nation's population, and only 15 percent of job applicants. But they still make up 80 percent of the US House of Representatives, 92 percent of the Senate, 92 percent of senior executives of Fortune 500 companies and 90 percent of newspaper editors.[3] While African Americans with post-graduate professional degrees are less likely to hold managerial positions than whites with high school diplomas, the average white high school dropout today earns as much as a Black male with two years of college. The mainstream economy may have been opened up to new groups, but white males are still in a dominant position.[4]

Enduring inequalities

Other economic indicators show how little has fundamentally changed in the Movement's aftermath. Affirmative action has indeed succeeded in enlarging the Black

Activity

1. An Ivy League college has just sent out letters of admission, and you are happy that you have been accepted. But at the same time, you fear you might have gotten in because both your father and grandfather attended the college and you know it gives preference to relatives of alumni.
Is this affirmative action? What should be done about it?

2. You decided to join the army after high school. You did not like the thought of fighting in a war, but you were aware that veterans got preference when they applied for certain educational benefits and civil service jobs, whether or not they had taken part in a war.
Is this affirmative action? What should be done about it?

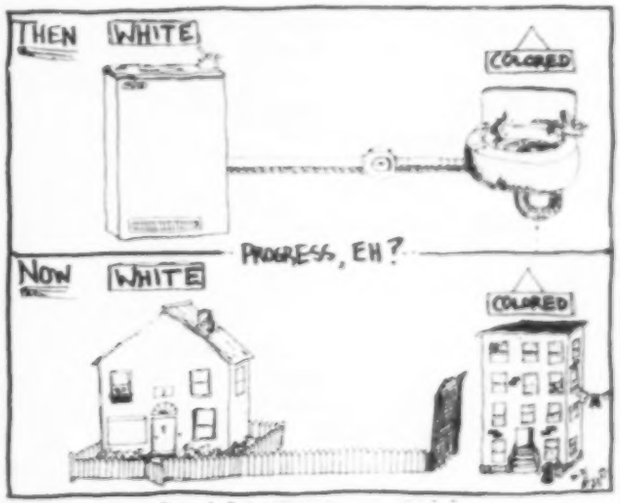
3. You are hoping to get a new government contract for your construction company. You feel fairly confident that you will beat out rival firms since you are on your own turf, and know a number of politicians and other power brokers personally. In fact, some of them have been your good friends since school.
Is this affirmative action?

4. You just started your own welding business and hope to qualify for a local government contract. The trouble is you are a woman, and the "old boy network" had a good laugh when you said you wanted the job.
Should you be able to benefit from affirmative action?

5. You are an African-American college graduate competing to get into medical school. Although you did well at college, you know that thousands of other medical school applicants have a comparable record. You also know that the number of African-American medical school graduates is declining, leaving many hospitals serving poor neighborhoods without doctors.
Should you be able to benefit from affirmative action?

Activity

Imagine that this cartoon by a Project HIP-HOP student appeared in your school newspaper. You have strong feelings about it. Write a letter to the editor of the paper, either agreeing with, or attacking, the cartoon's point of view. Give arguments to support your position.



middle class, to about a third of the entire Black population. But members of that middle class still earn only 70 cents for every dollar earned by whites.

In some respects, things are getting worse. The median income of African Americans of all classes, which had been 61 percent of the white median income in 1970, actually declined by the mid 1980s to 55 percent. The real earnings of Latino males, aged 20 - 29, has declined 27 percent between 1973-1993, and the real earnings of African-American males in the same age group has declined 48 percent. The gap between Black and white incomes has grown wider, as manufacturing jobs disappeared. Today, one third of all African Americans live below the poverty line, and 46 percent of their children (and 40 percent of Latino children) live in poverty. With the overall unemployment rate in the US twice as high for Blacks as for whites, it is estimated that 1.6 million jobs need to be made available to African Americans if they are to catch up. [5]

When we look not just at income but at wealth, including all the assets (the property people own — their houses, cars, financial holdings, and so on) each group possesses, the difference is even more startling. For every dollar worth of assets owned by middle class whites, members of the African American middle class possess wealth worth only 15 cents. If all classes are included, whites own 12 times the amount of wealth owned by African Americans. A recent study analyzing ongoing discrimination in extending loans, and mortgages and in housing markets finds that the "cumulative effects of the past have seemingly cemented blacks at the bottom of society's economic hierarchy....materially, whites and blacks constitute two nations." [6]

The same historical circumstances do not appear to apply to recent immigrant groups, including newcomers from Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America. They do not find themselves trapped to the same extent by the country's refusal to address the economic legacy of racism. For a number of reasons outlined by the authors of the book *Black Wealth/White Wealth*, they have an easier time establishing themselves in business and getting ahead.

Nowhere are the "two nations" more visible than in housing patterns, which have been described as a form residential apartheid. [7] The ghetto conditions described by the Kerner Commission have worsened over the years. African Americans and Latinos have long been largely confined to specific geographical areas by institutional practices such as "redlining" (used by the Federal Housing Authority, banks, and realtors to keep racial minorities in "their own" neighborhoods), racial covenants preventing property from being sold to minorities, zoning restrictions, and the planned segregation of subsidized housing. Even after the federal government committed itself to "fair housing" in the late 60s, it continued to subsidize segregated housing. Lingering institutional racism and racial prejudice have combined to keep the suburbs largely white.

Unequal education

Residential segregation has made it difficult to desegregate the schools. Southern schools were still almost entirely segregated in the early 60s, nearly a decade after the Brown decision. But the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forced schools in the South to desegregate or lose their federal dollars. Results were dramatic, as Southern schools became the least segregated in the nation by 1970.

In April 1971 in its decision in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenberg Board of Education*, the US Supreme Court ordered that school children should be bused to achieve integrated schools. The ruling caused such an outcry in both the North and the South that busing was not tried out until 1974. But in that year the Supreme Court heard the case *Milliken v. Bradley*. It ruled that students could not be bused between the (largely Black) metropolitan area of Detroit and its well-to-do white suburbs. Minority students were to be confined to run-down inner-city schools in their own neighborhoods, or bused to schools in low-income white urban neighborhoods, as happened with violent consequences in Boston in the early 80s. Once again poor whites turned to racial violence out of fear of losing what little they had.

Recent Supreme Court rulings have permitted the resegregation of schools, by releasing school districts from court-ordered desegregation plans before they have been carried out to completion. The authors of a recent book about the resegregation of schools are worried about the public's silence on the issue. They argue that "desegregation, properly understood, is an attack on the underlying system of inequality and a demand that the effective institutions and opportunities be shared with those who have historically been treated most unfairly." [8]

Now both the Supreme Court and society at large appear to have turned their back on that goal. The result may be that both segregation and new racial barriers to opportunity will be erected "in a society where only half of the children will be white in twenty-five years." [9] Today, African Americans make up a smaller percentage of the teaching force than they did in 1970. Schools are again starkly divided by race — and quality — in most Northern cities. In the South, the clock has been rolled back on desegregation, as whites shifted their children to private schools, many of them church-based. Many Southern states now have a private school system for whites, and a financially-starved public school system, mainly for African-American children.

In Mississippi, Project HIP-HOP learned about the way powerful members of the State Sovereignty Commission worked to prevent school integration, and (with FBI support) to discredit and even destroy Movement activists. Created by the state's governor in the wake of the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision, the Commission lasted until 1977. Its impact lives on. As we were told by former State Senator Henry Kirksie, "Even today Blacks are given the short end of every stick, in terms of education and economic opportunity." [10] Today there are 33,000 children in public schools in Jackson, Mississippi. Only 3,600 are white.

"Racism is over"

Why should anything more be done for racial minorities? Many people (including prominent politicians, Supreme Court justices, and members of conservative pressure groups) have for some time argued that racism is no longer a major obstacle for getting ahead. The Movement, they say, abolished the forms of legal discrimination which had kept members of different races from competing on an equal footing. White supremacy, without a leg to stand on, in their view simply collapsed. Individuals were left free to compete as equals for a "color-blind" society's rewards.

The effort to convince Americans that the playing field is now level — that if people of color don't get ahead they have only themselves to blame — gathered force during the economic recession of the mid 1970s, which began to turn the tide against affirmative action. The public seemed to believe that the battle against racism had been won. In the late 1970s the Supreme Court heard the *Bakke* case and came close to turning against affirmative action. Meanwhile, white Americans in a Gallup survey ranked "the problem of black Americans" as the very lowest [31st] when asked to rank 31 domestic and international issues according to their importance. White Americans refused to accept any responsibility for worsening conditions in the Black community or for continuing inequalities. They believed that racial oppression was something which had existed in the past, but that their generation should not have to pay for the mistakes of previous generations.

The Supreme Court again turns back the clock

In the decades since then, the Supreme Court has led the way in rolling back the gains of the Movement, much as it undermined the achievements of Reconstruction a century ago. Similar language and arguments have been used by the Supreme Court in both periods. For instance, when the Supreme Court declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 to be unconstitutional, the majority opinion stated:

"When a man has emerged from slavery...there must be some stage in the progress of his elevation when he takes the

Project HIP-HOP Voices

As Project HIP-HOP members, we reach out to the youth, and show how change has happened. People came together to overturn the laws and social norms that have oppressed Black people for centuries. We talk about the role which young people like ourselves played in that struggle. And we also try to show how racism still exists, and the urgent need to fight it today.

This is the most difficult of the three lessons. Racism in today's society is more subtle than it was when there were signs separating the races. But if you really look and know what you are looking at, you'll see racism as clear as a white hood.

We have another difficult challenge, which is to instill a sense of hope in people who don't want to struggle for nothing. A lot of youth who know what the Movement accomplished are aware of the rollback of these accomplishments, and feel like little has really changed. They look around, and see that some groups are still on the top, and others on the bottom. They see how the economy works, and recognize that Black people are filling the prisons. Giving people who are aware of all of this a sense of hope and new possibilities is a real task.

Then there are those young people who were born into the 80s, a time of partying and ignorant bliss. These youth don't have a reason to struggle. They aren't educated at all about the Movment, and feel totally powerless and politically dead. To get our message across to them is the biggest challenge of all — but one we must rise to if we are going to bring change together.

How do you think you can today create a sense of hope and overcome the feeling of being powerless?

US Supreme Court Roll Back

City of Richmond v. Croson

The judgment means that "set-aside" programs will only be constitutional if they benefit individuals who can prove that they have *personally* (not as part of a group) been victims of acts of discrimination.

Wards Cove Packing Co. Inc. v. Antonio

The Supreme Court in 1989 ruled that a statistical demonstration of "disparate impact" on large numbers of workers did not prove discrimination. The Court also made it much easier for employers to defend their hiring and promotion practices.

Martin v. Wilks

The Supreme Court in 1989 upheld the right of white firefighters to challenge a court settlement in Birmingham, Alabama which set long-term goals for hiring and promoting African Americans in the fire department. This decision has led to long-accepted court-approved settlements being challenged as "reverse discrimination" against whites

Patterson v. McLean Credit Union

The Supreme Court ruled in 1989 that once a contract is signed, employees can no longer use the Civil Rights Act of 1866 to protect themselves from racial harassment.

Adarand Constructors, inc. v. Pena

In 1995 the Supreme Court decided that programs which *combat* racial discrimination should be viewed in the same light as measures which *perpetuate* racial discrimination — as unconstitutional. It outlawed all but the most "narrowly tailored" federal affirmative action programs.

Redistricting decisions

In 1995 and 1996 the Supreme Court declared that race cannot be used as a "predominant factor" when voting districts are redrawn. In so doing, it overruled a 1982 amendment to the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which held that districts could be drawn in a way that maximized minority voting strength. The rulings will mean that fewer members of minority groups will be elected to federal, state, and local office.

rank of a mere citizen, and ceases to be the special favorite of the laws." Today, the same argument is used against affirmative action, which, it is claimed, gives Black people "special privileges" and is a form of "reverse discrimination" against whites, who are now the real victims of racism.

Since 1989, the Supreme Court has struck down methods used to fight racial harassment and employment discrimination. Negotiated agreements (known as "consent decrees") which forced police and fire departments to hire women and minority applicants are now being abolished, and state and local government programs that set aside a certain percentage of contracts for Black-and Hispanic-owned businesses are being shut down.

The attack on affirmative action threatens to hit education especially hard. In 1996 the Supreme Court refused to review a decision by the US Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit barring the University of Texas Law School from considering the race of applicants it admitted. The result is that today the entering class at the University of Texas Law School is once again all white. A similar backwards movement has occurred in California's universities since affirmative action was ended by public referendum.

Supreme Court decisions are also restricting the political representation of minority groups. In 1993 there were 8,000 Black elected officials in the country, a significant increase from fewer than 100 in 1965, when the Voting Rights Act was passed, but still only 2 percent of all elected officials.

The Voting Rights Act is now under attack. The Supreme Court has ruled that race can not be considered a "predominant factor" when voting district boundaries are re-drawn (as they are after every 10-year census — a process known as redistricting). It has struck down several districts drawn to maximize Black voting strength and ensure Black representation, as provided by a 1982 amendment to the Voting Rights Act. Eventually, this could mean that the US Congress, and state and local legislatures and other elective offices, including school boards, may again be nearly as "white" as they were before the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

Still the politics of divide and rule

Why is white America today so willing to move backwards? It is difficult to answer this question without reference to the role played by the media in scapegoating certain groups, and to the concentration of power in fewer and fewer hands. For instance, with all the talk about "welfare queens" having babies just to get bigger checks, you may be surprised to learn that on average, families on welfare have fewer than two children per family.

The last two decades have been a time of rapid economic upheaval. Jobs which once seemed secure have disappeared altogether or moved abroad in search of cheap labor. Incomes are declining, forcing more and more families to scramble for two or more incomes. Insecurity makes it is easy to blame "the other" — poor people on welfare who gobble up taxes, immigrants who take jobs, African Americans given "special privileges" by affirmative action. It is easier to turn against people who are even more insecure and marginal than it is to deal with the powerful forces responsible for the situation.

Money rules, as the nation's wealth is redistributed upwards. Since the 1980s US Administrations have made decisions that have deepened poverty, with the burden falling overwhelmingly on people of color. They have ended social programs in the inner cities,and training programs for the unemployed, and shredded the welfare safety net while, at the same time, giving the rich big tax breaks and engineering a massive transfer of wealth from everybody else to the already rich. Census statistics show that the richest 2.5 million Americans (the top one per cent) now receive as much income after taxes as the bottom 100 million (bottom 40 per cent), and the top 10 percent own 70 percent of all wealth in the country (up from 50 percent 20 years ago). The US has the greatest concentrations of wealth and poverty in the western industrial world.

The continuing existence of racism has allowed these political choices to be made. Instead of questioning the wisdom of these policies, the media have focused attention

on the behavior and family structure of the poor, especially poor African Americans, as the root cause of their poverty. If they were willing to work and had intact families, we are told, they would be able to better themselves, like everybody else. Imagine if, instead of blaming the poor, the newspapers and television regularly featured statements like this one, made by a white minister working in the South Bronx:

"Of course the family structure breaks down in a place like the South Bronx! Everything breaks down in a place like this. The pipes break down. The phone breaks down. The electricity and heat break down. The spirit breaks down. The body breaks down. The immune agents of the heart break down. Why wouldn't the family break down also? If we saw the people in these neighborhoods as part of the same human family to which we belong, we'd never put them in such places to begin with. But we do NOT think of them that way." [11]

Getting tough on crime

When manufacturing industries moved out of neighborhoods like the South Bronx, a drug economy, social destruction, and despair moved in. Instead of seeking to eradicate root causes and arrest those who profit most from importing and distributing illegal drugs, the police and courts have filled jails with small street dealers. Drug addiction, and the "war on drugs," have become a form of social control.

Drug use kills social activism and effective protest. The "war on drugs," fought almost exclusively in neighborhoods inhabited by people of color, has opened the way to forms of policing once associated with authoritarian states, not democracies. It has also made prisons our fastest growing industry.

African Americans make up 12 percent of the nation's population. Despite the fact that only 12 percent of the African-American population have been estimated to use or sell drugs, the great majority of those arrested in drug sweeps have been Black. African Americans are twice as likely to get prison terms as young white males arrested on identical charges. Under federal law there is a mandatory five-year prison sentence for possessing five grams of crack cocaine, while possession of that much powdered cocaine (the suburban drug of choice) gets the offender ten months' probation.

The kind of policing and media coverage aimed at communities of color have criminalized Black youth, inflamed racial fears, and built support for new get-tough approaches to fighting crime, no matter what the cost. According to the Washington DC-based Sentencing Project's 1995 report, over 30 percent of Black males between the ages of 20 and 29 and 12 percent of Latino males are today either in jail, or on parole or awaiting trial (the figure for white young men is 6.7 percent). The prison population grew a staggering 40 percent between 1990 and 1995. With one million people in state and federal prisons, and a further half million in city and county jails, we lead the world in the rate at which we lock up our citizens. Because only four states permit prisoners to vote, large numbers of African Americans and Latinos are being deprived of the franchise.

It is not just in urban areas that people of color feel unjustly treated by the criminal justice system. In rural Mississippi, for instance, "the hostile attitude of law enforcement personnel continues to create an atmosphere of fear in most African-American communities. In these communities many African Americans feel that very little has changed since the era of legalized segregation."[12] Community activists are troubled by the fact that since 1989 in Mississippi, at least 40 African-American youths have died in suspicious circumstances in county jails. Their deaths have been ruled "suicide" by local officials and later by the FBI.

What if the nation's jails were being filled by young white men? Do you think we as a people would be so prepared to expand the prison system, paying more to keep a nonviolent, first-time offender incarcerated than it costs to

Movement Voices

"If you hold the groups down, you also hold yourself down. But the powers that be are still so blinded by racism that they have not come to this realization. It costs $21,000 per capita per annum to incarcerate an individual. They'd rather do that than make the kinds of changes in the communities and the educational institutions that would forestall shoveling all these young people into these jails and prisons. That's a national problem, not just a Mississippi problem. We are seen as expendable. They haven't got over their innate feeling that some people are inferior...

There is so much to be done. A lot has not been passed down that should have been passed down... Don't wait to know who you are before becoming engaged in action. A lot of people discovered who they were through engagement. Life will pass you by if you stand by waiting to discover who you are."

Owen Brooks to Project HIP-HOP, July 13, 1995

"These days no one wants to get involved in politics. As a result a small group of people control the political process. Young people have to deal with this. Politics determine the future. Without your involvement in politics, the future could be a disaster. We need more than involvement in electoral politics. We need to revitalize grass-roots organizations. But I can't give you a blueprint. You have to find your own path. Learn not to make the same mistakes we made. Learn a tolerance of divergent opinions, as long as you are moving toward the same goal."

Claude Barnes to Project HIP-HOP, July 10, 1997

Project HIP-HOP Voices

"Where do we go from here?" can only be addressed when the uncertainty of our future forces us to put emphasis on the question and its significance.

With the aid of several veterans of the Movement, we were able to pinpoint some of the problems that, if unconfronted, become barriers in the African-Americans' path to true freedom. We learned that fear stands as one of our biggest problems — fear to investigate a church burning or police assault; fear that is preventing us from further progress.

Fear nourished becomes endemic and undefeatable. We must find ways to dismiss fear, and instill pride and hope in those experiencing the American nightmare.

The creation of community is step one. Without it, dialogue between the divided will not, cannot, be achieved. It is from that dialogue, that struggle, that all else grows.

The overwhelming obstacle to community currently is the collection of attitudes with which my generation has been programmed. Materialism and the assorted petty soap opera stuff have made their destructive presences felt. The Movement fizzled in the 1980s and it became all about "me." The history has not been passed on, while a value of the superficial has. These are challenges facing my generation.

Above are two views of some of the challenges facing youth today. Now that you have learned about the Movement, would you choose to play a part? If so, where would you begin? What would you like to change in your community? In your school? How would you go about it?

put that person through college? Or do you think we would become more aware of how the "war on drugs" threatens the liberties we often take for granted? The Bill of Rights, which promises people security from unreasonable searches in their homes, counts for little when a SWAT team in paramilitary gear is knocking down the door.

Moving forward again

"I look forward to the re-emergence of our large-scale struggle for democracy... filled with participants of many colors, offering creative alternatives for the lives of us all."

Vincent Harding, *Hope and History*

African-American, European-American, Asian-American and Latino, we, members of Project HIP-HOP, reflect the increasingly diverse population of this land. We know that our country is capable of better things. Our encounters with America's freedom fighters have taught us that tremendous change is possible if we are prepared to work for it, to take risks, and perhaps to make sacrifices.

To get moving again, we have to know how far we have come. We have to be honest about the losses, as well as the gains; the backward as well as the forward movement.

"Our fears," Hollis Watkins told us, "prevent us from accepting the reality of what we are seeing. We refuse to accept the truth that we have not made as much progress as society says we have. We miss how similar things are to how they were back then. We still need to overcome the fear. We want progress to be made, and hate to accept the truth that domination and control are still here. Young people get overwhelmed, and see so many different issues, they don't know where to start. But start somewhere, and it will begin to make a positive difference." [13]

The torch has been passed to us, the nation's youth. We take to heart Cleveland Sellers' words, "Once you are clear about where you want to go, how you get there won't be as difficult as you may think."

Footnotes

1. Dinesh D'Souza, *The End of Racism*, Free Press, 1995, p. 170.

2. *The Fourth Wave: A Continuing Conspiracy to Burn Black Churches*, Center for Democratic Renewal, March 1997.

3. Chester Hartman, editor, *Double Exposure and Race in America*, M.E. Sharpe, 1997, p. 12.

4. Tim Wise, *Little White Lies: The Truth about Affirmative Action and "Reverse Discrimination,"* Twomey Center for Peace through Justice, Loyola University, 1995.

5. Statistics in this unit are taken from newspapers, *Double Exposure and Race in America*; Randy Aldelba and Nancy Folbre, *The War on the Poor*, Center for Popular Economics, 1996; "The Growing Divide: Inequality and the Roots of Economic Insecurity," United for a Fair Economy, 1995.

6. Melvin Oliver & Thomas Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Equality*, Routledge, 1995, pp. 5-7.

7. Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, Harvard University Press, 1993.

8. Gary Orfield, Susan E. Eaton, *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown v. Board of Education*, The New Press, 1996, p. 366.

9. *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

10. Meeting with Project HIP-HOP, July 17, 1997.

11. Quoted in Jonathan Kozol, *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation*, Harper Crown, 1995, pp. 180-181.

12. *The Vision, Strategy and Program of Work of Southern Echo, Inc*, Jackson, MS, November 1995, p. 10.

13. Meeting with Project HIP-HOP, July 18, 1997.

Project HIP-HOP Voices: A Visit to the Red Neck Shop

One of the most horrific situations that I encountered while I was on Project Hip-Hop '97, was the visit to the Ku Klux Klan museum, in Laurens, South Carolina. Obviously other members and I expected intense amounts of racism in this town, especially from the owner of this shop. Unquestionably this is what we encountered, but we also found something that no one expected: feelings of powerlessness born of the sense that nothing had really changed.

The museum itself is built in the old Echo Movie Theater, and is not physically kept up well. The outside is dirty, signs are falling off and stickers are starting to peel off of the windows. In the windows are advertisements for paraphernalia the store sells. I remember a child's tee-shirt saying "Jesus Christ supports the KKK!"

We decided to visit the Red Neck Shop, the museum's gift shop, but not to pay the entry fee for the museum itself. We asked John Howard, the proprietor, "How can you sell such racist propaganda?" His reply was a barely audible statement that expressed his former belief in the Klan and that he no longer believed what the Klan stands for, but he thinks he should still sell these items because they represent history. It was extremely interesting talking with him because after a while he began to open up and talk about his role in the Klan and how his life was with them. He said he was a Grand Dragon. While he was part of this organization, he said he never hurt anyone, but he had heard stories of some people who did. He said that if Black people wanted to live in America fine, but just keep them separate from whites.

Inside the gift shop there were all sorts of racist souvenirs. One item was called a 'nigglet'. Nigglets are small distorted characterizations of Black people. Small Black children were turned into half human and half animal complete with pitch black skin and big pink lips. Other things that were sold in the shop were KKK emblems, confederate flags and books on how to start your own chapter of the KKK. There was also a children's clothing corner. To expose children to this type of intense hatred from such an early stage in life is to entirely annihilate any chance that they will grow up to be an open-minded functioning individual. This is not regular children's clothing I am talking about. On tee-shirts there were phrases like "My child's growing up to be a rebel!" or "My baby is a confederate baby" and so on. If you think that this store is devoid of business, you are mistaken. While we were there, three men came into the shop, bought tee-shirts, books, flags and left.

When the museum/gift shop was started, boycotts were organized by a coalition of local Black ministers, and Jesse Jackson also called on Attorney General Janet Reno and Governor David Beasley to shut down the shop. Obviously they failed. Many people, including myself, have had the assumption that "well, maybe if people were still protesting today the museum would be shut down." However, how can local people shut down something that is advertising the mindset of an entire town government?

Laurens is a small town, about 9,500 people, with nearly half of the residents being Black. We learned that racism in Laurens is not limited to this shop. In the early 90s a church built a school so that white children would not have to go to school with Black children. A local Black woman that we spoke to said that she felt that nothing had really changed because the majority of the City Council still thought like the Redneck shop owner. Even though the police force has been integrated, she feels that "When Black folks get a little bit of power, they act just like white folk." Black children are harassed when they are just hanging out, while white students can drink and hang out till the early morning hours.

If the power structure that you live under is against you from the beginning, how can you fight it? This overwhelming feeling of powerlessness is nationwide, which tells me that the youth have to become more involved in their communities, speak out against hate and hate groups, and start to really look at how racism is sustained in our society.

Definitions

Affirmative action — this term refers to the executive orders, administrative decisions and court rulings dating from the 1960s that attempted to open up opportunities, especially in employment and education, to *qualified* individuals in groups that had historically been shut out: African Americans, members of other minority groups and women. Affirmative action has *not* been about **quotas** -- or sacrificing quality to get the numbers right.

Bakke — the Supreme Court in 1979 in the case of *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* held that the minority set-aside at the University of California-Davis Medical School, which reserved 16 of 100 places for African Americans, discriminated against Alan Bakke, a white applicant. The case did not do away with affirmative action altogether, but said race could not be the deciding factor in admissions.

Redlining — the practice by which banks and lending agencies would draw a red line around minority communities and deny them mortgages and loans

Reverse discrimination — the notion that affirmative action victimizes whites as a group by not allowing them to compete fairly for jobs and educational places.

Set-asides — an affirmative action approach that reserved a certain percentage of government contracts for minority firms.

SWAT team — the Special Weapons and Tactics squads which act as special forces for many urban police departments.

Project HIP-HOP Voices

Some may argue that our society is or is nearing a condition where color is no longer taken into account. They point out that the marks of racial discrimination have vanished, and we have since made strides as a society towards the ideal of "color-blindness."

If we are blind to anything, it is not to color but to the effects of color in our society. The heralds of the color-blind society are quick to cite the gains of the 60s as an excuse to forgo measures necessary for the 90s. The danger in the ideal of a color-blind society is that in its appeal, it distracts from the historical and current reality, that color is and continues to be a relevant and prevalent factor in society. It is very easy to be lured into an uncritical acceptance of the ideal.

Surely, the most explicit signs of racial discrimination have been removed since the 60s. If not more equal, society has at the least become more sensitive about its appearance. Though color itself has not become less visible, the ways in which color is used as a mark against which to discriminate have become less decipherable. At one time it was easier to see that people of color in this country suffered an undeniable handicap. Now, however, everyone has an exception that disproves the rule. People can point to athletes, celebrities, or other public or private figures as proof that ours is a society which has risen above racism, which is now "color-blind".

Such a conclusion is not only wrong, it is dangerous. We must now look to questions of power and privilege. To have power is to be in control, and to enjoy privilege is to be able to stay in control. Who then is really in control of our socio-economic structure? Our institutions? The ideologies upon which our society operates? Then if we are to look at the disempowered, whose faces do we imagine? And what color are these faces?

Do These Headlines Reflect a Color-Blind Society?

US says BHA held units for whites
Racist cops caught in act of abusing Black man
Army to investigate hate group activity
How a Michigan campus erupted in racial strife
'Right now, we're in the midst of a civil war on this campus, and you can't turn your back on it.'
Wanted: colorblind employers
Racism in the law
Clash defines racial fault lines
Georgia Superintendent Battles a Subtle Racism
Death in a Jailhouse: The Ruling, a Suicide, The Fear, a Lynching
Racial Gap on Mortgages
Rain holds sway in Ala.
Sowing the seeds of discrimination
Church burnings a sad replay of 1960s
Burial of Mixed-Race Baby Provokes All-White Church
Blackface Ignite An Angry Response in Rye
MIAMI RACISM ERUPTS AGAIN
Blacks still face high loan-rejection rate

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Cornel West Speaks for Project HIP-HOP

The tradition to struggle for decency and dignity is exactly what it is all about...This tradition stays alive precisely because a significant number of young people believe that it's worth fighting for, hence they disproportionately contribute to the substance of this tradition ..

Can we pass the baton? That's the question. For me there are four basic pillars for young people. The first is something profoundly un-American. That is, a sense of history. There is simply no way that a traditional struggle can stay alive in a hotel civilization without a sense of history. Situating yourself in a situation bigger than you and locating yourself in a narrative larger than you so that you can connect yourself, relate yourself to those who came before, and measure yourself against the high standards of vision and analysis and courage that they have set. And I'm not just talking about the greatest hits of the struggle. I'm talking about nameless and numerous forefathers and foremothers, who very few people know about, who you might know in your family...

It is so very difficult to have the sense of history that I'm talking about, especially for young people. Because young people have grown up in a particular stage of our hotel civilization in which market forces bombard them with an intensity that we older folk did not experience... There is no doubt in my mind that hip-hop itself, as a culture, as music, is not primarily about just sound and notes. It's about young people wrestling with social breakdown, of which large numbers of older people are fearful, and no longer able to provide young people with council and wisdom and love...

In addition to a sense of history, being able to read our present moment as history, we need a sense of empathy. That is what I love about Project HIP-HOP. It doesn't simply build on the grand creativity and originality of young people in the American musical tradition, and in particular, the black musical tradition. But it's about trying to generate the wheels of imagination, to conceive of what it's like to be in the shoes of other people. That empathy, at its best, is to be able to step outside of one's own personal world and project oneself into another world, so that when you come back to your world, your world has changed. You've been transformed...

The reason why Project HIP-HOP is so very important is because it's not just a matter of young folk having fun. It's actually an affirmation of the best of what the democratic tradition is about, and I must say in all openness, I believe that the best of the black freedom struggle is the best of the American democratic tradition. Because if enough fellow citizens can wrestle with the vicious legacy of white supremacy, they can wrestle with nearly anything else in America.

Race is the rawest nerve in the country. It is the most explosive issue. I go as far as brother James Baldwin, who says that it is the one issue which, in all its manifestations, has the capacity to bring down the curtain on this precious experiment in democracy called America. So if we can wrestle with race, then we're more than likely able to deal with poverty and the vast economic inequality and the ugly legacy of male supremacy and homophobia. Of course Project HIP-HOP recognizes that race goes hand in hand with expanding democratic abilities and possibilities.

The third pillar is courage. And this is something which I think young people can teach older people. So many older people I know feel that they have such a grand moral vision and a very sharp analysis, but when it comes time to acting on it, all of a sudden things get so ambiguous and complex that they can't take a stand...

Courage is a virtue. It is not learned... You become courageous by being courageous, by taking a risk...The young people have to be able to see courage and spend time around those folks who are engaged in consistently courageous activity...

Last but not least, in addition to a sense of history and empathy and courage, we've got to have a sense of hope, and we've got to bequeath that sense of hope to young people. But I don't believe young people will ever instill within themselves a sense of hope unless we speak to their sense of despair...We've got to acknowledge that despair and transfigure it into hope knowing that young people have to make a leap of faith beyond the bullets, beyond the funerals; a leap of faith that says "Look, even if there's not enough evidence, we're still able to recognize that for you the world is still incomplete and history is still unfinished.

The future is still open-ended, and what you think and do still makes a difference...We can turn to the freedom fighters of the 1960s and say "Keep your eyes not on each other's inadequacies, keep your eyes on the prize."

Professor Cornel West of Harvard University at a benefit for Project HIP-HOP South Africa, April 22, 1996.

Project HIP-HOP Voices

What allows one human being to see the suffering of another human being and stay silent and inactive? So many people are willing to talk about the problems in the world, but so few are willing to do anything to alter the wrongs they see around them. Only when we as individuals are able to move past the complaining stage and look towards positive action can things begin to change.

Imagine if Rosa Parks had simply complained about the injustices of segregation on Montgomery buses. She never would have been the catalyst which helped end Jim Crow segregation in the South.

Along with other students from the Boston area, I was able to learn more about Rosa Parks and many people like her whose names remain unknown to most of us. I was able to bridge the gap between the nation's recent history and the responsibilities of young people today. Meeting people who had spent their youth fighting for what they believed in inspired me to begin a similar fight. Through their stories, they passed on the torch of resistance, along with the challenges that still abound.

I can't just sit back and let the despair that is raining down upon young people dampen my efforts to confront injustice in this country. The more I learn about the heroines and heroes who dedicated their lives to the Movement, the less I can stay still. Seeing the role young people have played in keeping the Movement alive, how can I stay passive?

I know there are others who feel like I do, but think the problem is too big, or that they are too little to really change anything. I think we must dedicate ourselves to change. Even if we become aware of a problem that might seem tiny or insignificant, we must not stay silent or the world will never change.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Films and Other Resources

All Power to the People! The Black Panther Party and Beyond, Electronic News Group, POB 86208, Los Angeles, CA

Eyes on the Prize, Parts I and II (a total of 14 segments), produced by Blackside, available from PBS Video, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314

Freedom on my Mind, produced and directed by Connie Fields and Marilyn Muford, Clarity Film Release, call (510) 841-3469

Project HIP-HOP South Africa, a 35-minute film available from Cambridge Educational, (800) 468-4227

Project HIP-HOP videotapes of interviews with Movement veterans (also available on audiotape)

Audio Resources

I'm Gonna Let it Shine: a Gathering of Voices for Freedom (civil rights songs), available from the Highlander Center, 1959 Highlander Way, New Market, TN 37820

Let the Circle Be Unbroken, a 12-part radio series, 1997, available from National Public Radio

Journals

Race & Class, produced by the Institute of Race Relations in London, available from Nancy Murray at the Bill of Rights Education Project, (617) 482-3170 x 314.

Race Traitor, Journal of the New Abolitionism, available from PO Box 603, Cambridge, MA 02140

For information about material on civil rights and civil liberties available from the ACLU, contact Nancy Murray, (617) 482-3170 x 314.

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The Bill of Rights Education Project and Project HIP-HOP

The Bill of Rights Education Project develops innovative strategies of citizenship education designed to make the Bill of Rights relevant to young people. Founded in November 1987 by the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Education and the Massachusetts Bar Association, the Project encourages teachers and middle and high school students to think critically about the difficult issues being debated in society and the courts, seeing this as essential to the future well-being of democracy.

During the past decade, the Bill of Rights Education Project has held ten conferences for teachers on civil rights and civil liberties issues, fourteen conferences for up to 600 students each, six summer institutes for teachers, two anti-racism retreats for students, and smaller workshops and other events. Our newsletter, *Bill of Rights Network*, is sent free of charge to 3,000 teachers around Massachusetts.

The Project has placed a particular emphasis on the need to fight racism, and to facilitate student contact across racial and ethnic lines. The centerpiece of our anti-racism education is **Project HIP-HOP (*Highways into the Past: History, Organizing & Power*)**, which we launched in cooperation with Teens as Community Resources and the Massachusetts Student Alliance Against Racism and Violence in 1993. This innovative "rolling classroom" involves taking a diverse group of high school students on a 5,000-mile tour of the South, visiting key sites of the Movement of the 1950s and 60s, and meeting with Movement veterans and young people who are involved today in working for positive social change. In 1996 representatives from each Project HIP-HOP tour of the South journeyed to South Africa.

In the post-tour phase of Project HIP-HOP, student participants become teachers, and go into schools talking about their experiences. They have made presentations to over 15,000 of their peers. An eighth grader at a school in western Massachusetts evaluated Project HIP-HOP's visit to her class this way: "I have never heard speakers who stir up your emotions, or have spoken better than them. I honestly mean it. I'm not ever going to forget it." The HIP-HOP program has expanded the educational horizons and range of skills of participants, and enabled them to serve their schools and local communities as advocates and examples.

Project HIP-HOP has been featured in the local and national media, including *The New York Times* and National Public Radio. It received a "Special Recognition Award" from the Massachusetts Black Legislative Caucus in 1995. "Violence, Nonviolence, and the Lessons of History: Project HIP-HOP Journeys South," by Nancy Murray and Marco Garrido, was published in the *Harvard Educational Review* in its special issue on Youth and Violence (Summer 1995). Its site on the World Wide Web can be contacted either through AOL (keyword ACLU and then Student Rights) or at http:www.users.aol.com/mcluf/home.html.

The Bill of Rights Education Project and Project HIP-HOP have been supported by the generosity of individual donors, and the following foundations and corporations: BankBoston, Ruth M. Batson Educational Foundation, Boehm Foundation, Boston Globe Foundation, the Boston Foundation, Cheresh Family Fund, Church Home Society, Eastman Fund, Education for Action, Fleet Investment Services, Foley Hoag & Eliot Foundation, Grant Trippel Memorial Fund, Greeley Foundation, Hyams Foundation, the Lotus Philanthropy Program, Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA, RESIST, Trinity Church, the US Trust Company.

For more information about Project HIP-HOP, or to schedule a presentation, contact Nancy Murray at the Bill of Rights Education Project.

The Bill of Rights Education Project
99 Chauncy Street, Suite 310
Boston, MA 02111
tel (617) 482-3170 x. 314

Movement Voices

Claude Barnes

A radical student leader in Greensboro, North Carolina in the late 1960s and 1970s, Claude Barnes now teaches Political Science at the North Carolina Agriculture and Technology University.

Owen Brooks

Owen Brooks is originally from Boston, Massachusetts and has been a Movement activist for more than 50 years. After hearing Fannie Lou Hamer speak at a rally, he moved to Greenville, in the Mississippi Delta, and worked for the Delta Ministry on voter registration and community education and development.

Rev. Harold Middlebrook

Harold Middlebrook had been a youth minister at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta where he lived with Dr. King's family. He was present at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis when Dr. King was assassinated. Today, he has a ministry in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Cleveland Sellers

Cleveland Sellers became the program director of SNCC at age 20. He was arrested and imprisoned after the Orangeburg Massacre in in 1968, and later received a pardon from the Governor of South Carolina. He currently te[illegible]s African American Studies at the University of S[illegible] Carolina.

Hollis Watkins

The first Mississippi student to become involved in SNCC, he joined in 1961 when he was 19 years old. He was a member of the SNCC Freedom Singers. In 1989 he founded Southern Echo in Jackson, Mississippi to work for Black empowerment. He traveled to South Africa with Project HIP-HOP in the summer of 1996.